

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The increasing internationalisation of higher education is one obvious result of globalisation. In Australia in 2013, 18.8% of onshore students studying at Australian universities were international students (Australian Education International, 2014), meaning approximately one in every five students on campus in Australia who is studying at tertiary level is from overseas. Of these students, 82% are from non-English speaking countries (OECD, 2014, p. 360). For international students who are coming to study in Australia, with English as a second or additional language in an already culturally diverse society, there is a clear need for positive intercultural experiences through the development of an intercultural perspective and effective communication skills. Studies have shown that developing an intercultural perspective helps students understand cultural difference facilitating cultural adjustment and intercultural interactions (Campbell & Li, 2007; Gu, Schweisfurth, & Day, 2010; Wright & Schartner, 2013). Increased cultural understanding and positive interactions can contribute to emotional security (Tananuraksakul & Hall, 2011), developing a sense of self (Killick, 2011; Volet & Jones), and increased interaction with members of the local community (Wright & Schartner, 2013). These elements are deeply interconnected with developing academic language skills (Trahar, 2010).

For the purpose of this study, intercultural language teaching and learning (ILTL)¹, will be used to refer to a description provided by Liddicoat et al in their 2003 Report on intercultural language learning as follows: *“Intercultural language learning involves developing with learners an understanding of their own language(s) and culture(s) in relation to an additional language and culture. It is a dialogue that allows for reaching a common ground for negotiation to take place, and where variable points of view are recognised, mediated and accepted. It involves the learner in the ongoing transformation of the self, his/her ability to communicate, to understand communication within one’s own and across languages and cultures, and to develop the capability for ongoing reflection and learning about languages and cultures.”*

¹ The term used in the 2003 Report on intercultural language learning by Liddicoat et al was ‘intercultural language learning’ (IcLL) and was later designated as intercultural language teaching and learning (ILTL)(Scarino & Liddicoat, 2009).

(Liddicoat, Papademetre, Scarino, & Kohler, 2003, p. 1). ILTL continues to be used as the initialised term for theorising in this area (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013).

While this study focuses on adult learners in a university preparation course, intercultural understanding is widely recognised as an essential component of languages education through a range of levels and age groups. For example, it forms the theoretical basis of the *Australian Curriculum: Languages* (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2010) which has recently been released as a unified framework to enable all students to engage in learning an additional language across the years of schooling in Australia. ‘Intercultural competence’ is also a central component the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR - Council of Europe, 2011). The framework aims to equip all citizens for international mobility and increased co-operation throughout Europe. The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) is the national association for language education professionals in the United States and represents all languages and all levels of instruction. It also specifies the integration cultural competence into its content standards (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, 2012) and more specifically for intercultural competence in its position statement on Global Competence (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, 2014).

While the importance of intercultural language learning is widely recognised, my own experience of learning Japanese at university in Australia was that it focused mainly on developing academic language skills through the correct use of grammatical structures and vocabulary; there was a noticeable lack of intercultural language instruction. The courses maintained a strong linguistic focus but tended to pay little attention to how to perform effectively and appropriately with others who are linguistically and culturally different. Nor did courses provide opportunities for reflection on the relationship between one’s own language(s) and culture(s) and the new language and culture, and the ways in which this positions the learner in contexts of language use. Similarly, as an exchange student in Japan, the focus of the language course was on learning structures and vocabulary in preparation for the Japanese Language Proficiency Test (JLPT) rather than assisting students with connecting with the culture and the people while living in-country.

The context

Seven years after having been in Japan as an exchange student, I returned to Japan to teach English at a foreign languages university. It was during that time I started using Readers' Theatre (RT) as part of the first year English Reading course. After integrating RT into the reading course, I noticed significant increases in student engagement, deeper and more sophisticated reflections and responses to the texts that were covered and increased student insight into the interrelations between language and culture. This prompted more careful consideration of the potential for RT to draw attention to aspects of intercultural language learning, such as developing multiple perspectives and reflecting on how cultural values and beliefs affect various forms of language use and behaviours.

Having returned to Australia to teach English in a university preparation course for students who aim to undertake masters degrees at an Australian university, I recognised the same focus on academic language without catering to the development of students' ability to understand their own and other languages and cultures. The strong linguistic focus, which does not clearly acknowledge the interrelatedness between language and cultures, was similar to the instruction I had experienced myself as a languages student in Australia and Japan. This is reflected in the materials that are used for classes, which do not engage with culture as being inextricably connected to language. The strong linguistic focus is also intensified due to the pressure experienced by students to perform for the university entry test, which measures reading, writing, listening and speaking skills and does not provide any practical and visible incentive for students to develop intercultural competencies. As a result, students' attention is diverted away from learning through the rich cultural context in which they live, despite the need to prepare for successful integration into the social and cultural context of the university upon entry. Therefore, the formation of ideas contributing to this study arose from the positive student responses to RT with university students in Japan and by recognising the need for international students studying in Australia to develop the intercultural skills needed to effectively participate in university life.

In order to contextualise my understanding of the skills that students need for intercultural communication, and to find criteria for competence in ILTL, I turned to an

examination of the models of intercultural language learning that have been developed by a number of researchers, outlined below:

1. Dr Milton J. Bennett is an American professor who became well known in the field of Intercultural Communication for developing the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) in 1986 (Bennett, 1986). The model was developed through grounded theory by organising observations into six stages of increasing sensitivity to cultural difference from Denial of Difference through to Integration of Difference. The DMIS and the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) which was co-developed with Mitchell Hammer are both widely used for Intercultural training and assessment (Bennett, 1993; Bennett & Hammer, 1998).

2. Michael Byram is an emeritus Professor at Durham University, England. In 1994 Byram and Geneviève Zarate developed a model for the Council of Europe in which they defined four '*savoirs*' for assessing social cultural competence. The choice of the verb '*savoir*' rather than its direct English translation - 'to know' - captures the range and richness of meaning that can lie within a term - *savoir* in Byram's usage implies that the learner knows, understands, comprehends, has a capacity for and a facility for language use within a particular culture. *Phronesis*, or 'practical wisdom', might be the closest Aristotelian knowledge equivalent, distinguishing it from the other Greek knowledge words '*episteme*' and '*techne*' which might be characterised as 'book learning' and technical knowledge. (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* trans. Terence Irwin (2nd edition; Hackett, 1999) The challenge of finding just the right word in this instance highlights the fact that a direct translation from one language to another cannot always capture the full essence of meaning.

'*Savoirs*' attend to knowledge, attitudes, skills of interpreting and relating and skills of discovery and interaction. In 1997, Byram introduced a fifth *savoir* of 'critical cultural awareness' in the book 'Teaching and Assessing Intercultural Competence' (Byram, 1997). Byram's 1997 model for assessing Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) has contributed significantly to the Common European Framework Reference for teaching foreign languages (Council of Europe, 2001)

3. Liddicoat et al were a group of researchers working out of the Research Centre for Languages and Culture Education (RCLCE) at the University of South Australia on a commissioned project by the Australian Government. The project addressed the interrelationship of languages and cultures in the learning, teaching, assessment, and

evaluation of languages in Australian schools. As part of their 2003 Report on intercultural language learning, five Principles for intercultural language teaching and learning were identified and introduced as a guide for curriculum design (Liddicoat, Papademetre, Scarino, & Kohler, 2003).

I therefore decided to explore the potential of these models for analysing the development of Intercultural understanding against the actual experience of international students working with RT in preparing to study at an Australian university.

Significance of the study

Many researchers have been examining the use of and ways of promoting ILTL, especially in the last two decades. They include studies into the areas of Information Communication Technology (ICT), study abroad and teacher training.

For example, ILTL has been investigated for its potential to provide exposure to contemporary and authentic resources for language learning and for activities connecting students from different languages and cultures through ICTs (Elola & Oskoz, 2008; Kern, 1998; Liaw, 2006; O'Dowd, 2003; Warschauer, 1998). Research on ILTL as influenced by study abroad programs has looked at students' ability to adjust to cultural differences (Jackson, 2010; Wang & Byram, 2011), and the various effects on attitudes towards languages, cultures and language learning (Paige, Cohen, Kappler, Chi, & Lassegard, 2002; Paige, Jorstad, Siaya, Klein, & Colby, 1999). Studies have also been conducted on the experiences of teachers who are learning to incorporate an intercultural stance into their classes (Kohler, 2010; Moloney, 2010; Morgan, 2007, 2008).

Therefore, it is evident that there is a keen interest in improving ILTL to provide a more complete approach to teaching language and culture. This study is significant in being the first to examine RT for ILTL and to examine the models of ILTL in relation to the students' experience of RT.

Readers' Theatre

Readers' Theatre is sometimes referred to as 'Theatre of the Mind' or 'Theatre of the Imagination', and is a form of process drama that is centred on a written text (Wolf, Edmiston, & Enciso, 1997). RT makes minimal use of sets, props and costumes. The performers work together as they negotiate their roles through group discussion and experiment with language in preparation for semi-structured performances in which they 'act' their parts while holding their scripts. A key feature is that performers therefore embody the script through exploration of vocal expression and physical movements, requiring a high level of emotional and imaginative involvement from themselves, other participants and the audience (Denzin, 1997).

To date, most of the research conducted on the use of RT has focused on its potential to improve first language reading fluency in primary school children (Clementi, 2010; Martinez, Roser, & Strecker, 1998; Mraz et al., 2013; Rasinski & Hoffman, 2003; Young & Rasinski, 2009).

Another feature of RT that is consistently noted in the literature is its potential to use this emotional and imaginative engagement to increase student motivation and enjoyment (Barchers, 2001; Corcoran & Davis, 2005; Garrett & O'Connor, 2010; McMaster, 1998; Millin & Rinehart, 1999; Moran, 2005b; Podlozny, 2000; Poe, 2010; Shosh, 2005; Uthman, 2002; Weisenburger, 2009).

Empirical research conducted on RT in the English as a second or additional language context has been limited and these studies have generally been undertaken with and focused on primary school children (Chen, 2009; Tian & Wu, 2012; Tsou, 2011; Wu & Yang, 2012).

We do not know much about the experience of university students using RT as part of their second or other language learning experience outside their own country. We also know little about how RT can be used as a vehicle for both enhancing SLA and ILTL among this group of language learners. This study is an attempt to help to fill this gap.

Aims

This study explored the way in which Readers' Theatre (RT) might contribute to intercultural language learning for international students who are preparing to study in a second language context, using three accepted intercultural models for the analysis.

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. In what ways might the teaching and learning affordances of RT contribute to intercultural language teaching and learning?
2. To what extent do the frameworks that have been identified as underpinning ILTL help to explain and support the use of RT in helping both teachers and students?

The study sought to explore whether some of the teaching and learning affordances of RT draw participants' attention to the interrelatedness of culture and language. Some of the possibilities for intercultural language learning as part of RT include the focus on meaningful interaction, reflection and discussions based on authentic texts, and engaging in communication in which learners are positioned as both performers and observers. In the course of the study, participants were also asked to consider the many forms that communication takes, including non-verbal communication highlighted through the performative element of RT. It also sought to examine whether awareness of these elements of communication assists in drawing attention to the cultural influence on communication by helping participants to 'decentre', to reflect critically on their own society, values and behaviours in their daily lives, following the RT experience.

Methodology

In answering the research questions, a qualitative research approach was used, including interviews with three participants as described in Chapter 3. This approach involved collecting data from multiple sources - a pre-intervention focus group discussion; video recordings of all five RT sessions; three individual interviews at one week and twelve weeks post-RT intervention; and teacher reflections throughout the RT sessions and three individual interviews. These reflections are included in the appendix.

Despite the fact that the development of intercultural awareness is a dynamic and complex process (Paige, 2004), many researchers persist in using growth psychometric scales which involve completing online or pencil and paper multiple questionnaires, which can only gain a snapshot of development at one point in time, and they often rely on self-reporting which is limited by the insight of participants (Perry & Southwell, 2011). Participants often respond to questioning by overestimating what they actually do in real life.

A case study approach is able to account for both individual episodes and also capture developments over time in more descriptive, authentic and accurate data, revealing progress and growth in intercultural competence.

Firth and Wagner note that the intricacies of language acquisition are always tied to the context of social interaction, which is a major element of the RT process, and further investigation into the 'emic' (participant-relevant) aspects of language learning is important and still under-researched (Firth & Wagner, 2007). Participant relevant aspects of learning lie at the heart of intercultural communicative competence. This study focuses directly on the way in which international students experience RT as a contributor to their intercultural language learning and competence.

Limitations of the study

1. Case studies are not generalisable to all teaching and learning contexts. However, they do allow for a more in-depth and richer understanding of the subjective experience of learners. A more holistic account of participants' experiences of RT can be gained through the use of case study research.
2. There were also limitations with regard to the intensity and length of the intervention. This study used five 90 minute sessions over a period of two and a half weeks. While this was due to constraints of the school at which the study was undertaken, more time for actual RT intervention would have been preferable.
3. The researcher is one of the participants' regular class teachers, which may have influenced willingness to participate more actively in RT sessions. It could also have biased the responses resulting in participants giving positive responses about their experiences of RT out of a desire to please the researcher.

Outline of Chapters

In Chapter 1 the key concepts of the study are introduced in the context of teaching English language learners who are preparing to undertake postgraduate degrees at an Australian university. An overview of the significance and aims of the study are provided followed by a brief explanation of the study's methodology and limitations.

Chapter 2 reviews the literature on ILTL and RT in relation to the study.

Chapter 3 presents a description and explanation of methodology used for this study.

Chapters 4-7 present the results from the study as follows: Chapter 4 describes the results and analysis of the data from the initial pre-intervention focus group discussion.

Chapter 5 includes results and analysis of data from all five of the RT intervention sessions. Chapters 6 & 7 present results and analysis of data from the interviews of three participants at one and twelve weeks post intervention, respectively. Chapter 7 concludes with a discussion of results from Chapters 4-7.

Chapter 8 includes a summation of the analyses of the study as well as addressing the limitations of the study, implications for use of RT, and recommendations for further research around the use of RT for ILTL. The appendix provides examples of some of the researcher's reflections over the course of the study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

Intercultural Language Teaching and Learning

Culture is central to language; both work together to create and exchange meaning (Liddicoat et al., 2003; Paige et al., 1999). An intercultural view of language sees culture as dynamic, variable and constantly changing, and it sees participants as having the potential to shape the evolution of their particular culture (Crichton & Scarino, 2007; Pennycook, 2014).

Intercultural communication is emerging as a vital element of second languages education because it helps learners to develop the ability to negotiate meaning across linguistic and cultural contexts. Developing intercultural understanding is essential if learners are to participate successfully in an increasingly globalised world (Crozet, Liddicoat, & Lo Bianco, 1999; Nguyen, Terlouw, & Pilot, 2006; Pauwels, 2000; Scarino, 2009). Essentially, intercultural understanding involves understanding and interpreting communication and interaction between people across cultures. Part of this process is gaining a better ‘intra-cultural’ awareness - that is, a better understanding of one’s own self and culture as well as developing an ‘intercultural’ awareness and sensitivity to others and their culture(s) (Papademetre, 2005; Papademetre & Morgan, 2008; Papademetre & Scarino, 2000; Scarino, 2009; Scarino & Liddicoat, 2009) .

Intercultural language teaching and learning (ILTL) recognises the roles of language and culture in the communication of meaning (Kramsch, 1993a; Scarino & Crichton, 2007). It challenges a more traditional view of culture within language learning as *“some sort of fifth macro-skill which is introduced once the skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing have been established.”* (Liddicoat, 2003, p.7). From an intercultural perspective, explicit teaching of culture and its relationship to language is central to language learning across all interrelated macro skills. It helps learners identify how their frame of reference is shaped by experiences within their own language(s) and culture(s) and how their experiences influence their understanding and interpretation of meaning. It also recognises that others are communicating from their own frame of reference, influenced by past experiences of language and culture (Papademetre, 2005; Papademetre & Scarino, 2000; Scarino, 2009). Cultural

understanding is integrated into other language skills and intercultural exploration. This occurs through participation and reflection to help learners to become more aware of the roles of language and culture in human interaction and to become increasingly capable in intercultural contexts (Liddicoat, 2003). Key concepts distinguishing ILTL from other theories of language learning are:

- (a) The conceptualisation of language, culture and their relationship
- (b) The position of the language learner
- (c) Classroom interactions, experiences and reflection

(a) The conceptualisation of language culture and their relationship

Language as social practice

Intercultural language teaching and learning sees language as a social practice (Kramsch, 1993b). Sociocultural theory has greatly influenced the view of language as social practice in the field of second language acquisition. Up until the 1980s the dominant research perspective was of 'language as code' which derives from cognitive based research (Zuengler & Miller, 2006). Saussure (1922 [1916]), a structural linguist from the Geneva School was one of the first to promote the view of language as a scientific structural system. Later, Chomsky's (1957) idea of Universal Grammar, which assumes an innate cognitive ability for humans to convert linguistic data into distinguished categories such as noun, verb, etc. was also highly influential in the field of SLA. Promoting a view of different languages as codes to be learnt leads to a focus on grammar for understanding language. It also tends to value standardised or native speaker norms as 'correct' and distinct from language used authentically in local contexts (Canagarajah, 2007; Cenoz & Gorter, 2011; Konishi & Tarone, 2004; Pennycook, 2005, 2012a). It is argued that a standardised focus can also lead to loss of linguistic diversity (Orman, 2013). While a view of language as structural code is helpful in moving away from a superficial focus on forms of language, it fails to draw attention to the social context in which communication takes place (Haugh & Liddicoat, 2009; Pennycook, 2006).

A view of language as social practice moves beyond the idea that language is code to recognise the complexities of communication and interaction between people situated in specific contexts. Instead language is viewed as a resource for understanding,

communicating about and participating in the world (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013; Pennycook, 2012b).

In particular Vygotskian sociocultural theory introduced to the field of SLA with work by Frawley and Lantolf (1984, 1985) and subsequent works by (Lantolf 2000) was still concerned with cognition, yet through meaningful social interaction. Further publications influenced by sociocultural theory emerged in what Johnson (2006) refers to as the ‘sociocultural turn’ in language learning theory. This included work from a language socialisation perspective (Ochs 1988; Watson-Gegeo 2004; Duff 2007), theories of situated learning (Firth & Wagner, 1997; Lave & Wenger, 1991) and critical theory (Canagarajah, 2005; Kachru, 2006; Norton, 2000; Pennycook, 2006).

A language socialisation perspective investigates the social and cultural organisation of language practices. It involves a focus on the interactional contexts in which learning takes place and views learning as a life-long process rather than emphasising the learner’s level of acquisition (Ochs, 2000; Duff and Hornberger, 2010).

Theories of situated learning also recognise the importance of social interaction for learning, in particular viewing participation in social practices as a site for the co-construction of knowledge (Lave & Wenger 1991).

Critical Theory not only examines language learning contexts, but also raises questions associated with the power relations, inequality, change and identity that surround language learning (Zuengler and Miller, 2006; Pennycook 1999).

As these views gained increasing precedence they called for a reconceptualisation of language through an enhanced awareness of contextual and interactional dimensions of language use. Furthermore, this turn influenced a more expansive view of language learning that recognises that the processes and products of language learning are found in everyday communicative exchanges as learners develop in their trajectories of experiences (Scarino, 2010).

Culture as dynamic

Also, the concept of culture has evolved significantly in the context of learning languages (Atkinson, 1999; Kramsch, 1993a; Liddicoat et al., 2003; Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013; Paige et al., 1999). So-called traditional views of culture, sometimes referred to as ‘high culture’ or ‘Big C’ culture (Carter & McCarthy, 1994), view culture as static and objective knowledge, acquired through the study of an established canon

of literature or artistic practice, such as opera and theatre. Language learning through the classical method, also known as 'Grammar Translation Method', focused on written translation (Brown, 2007). This approach to learning language and culture measures competence by the student's breadth of reading and familiarity with texts that usually represent the target culture as it was in an earlier period. Minimal attention is given to spoken communication and the educated native speaker is idealised as the model speaker (Morgan, Kohler, & Harbon, 2011).

Cultural studies grew as a popular interdisciplinary field in the 1960s and 1970s. For example, in his seminal work *Culture and Society* Raymond Williams (1958) wrote from a cultural materialism perspective based in critical theory. Cultural materialism refers to an approach that attempts to explain the representation of social and cultural systems through critical literary analysis. For instance, through the analysis of significant British literary works, Williams (1958) argued that the Industrial Revolution and its influence on politics and society contributed to the Western notion of culture.

From the field of Linguistics, John Gumperz (1971), used discourse analysis to investigate how meaning is created through social interaction, most often referred to as interactional sociolinguistics. In particular, Gumperz was interested in the use of contextualised and culturally specific verbal and non-verbal cues that can lead to misunderstanding.

American anthropologist, Clifford Geertz (1972, 1973) was a prominent researcher in the fields of anthropology and communication studies using the framework of symbolic anthropology which views culture as a system of symbolic forms. He argued that the study of cultural symbols and their interpretation could lead to a better understanding of a society. Another prominent American anthropologist who made a significant contribution to the development of intercultural communication as an area for research was Edward T. Hall (1959; 1969; 1976) who published on behavioural and cognitive constructs. His work drew attention to variations in the use of space, concepts of time and expectations for the implicit or explicit communication of messages across cultures.

In more recent years, there were also theorists such as Richard Schechner (Schechner, 1993), Ruston Bharucha (Bharucha, 2000) and Anne-Marie Morgan (Morgan, 2000) have studied the intercultural in performance spheres.

1980s research in anthropology influenced a view of culture as a collective set of values and practices. This paradigm recognises the importance of the link between language and culture, but had the potential for stereotyping if culture is portrayed in a static or homogeneous light (Byram & Feng, 2005). The paper by Street '*Culture is a verb*' challenged the traditional concept of culture in terms of language learning as limited and static (Street, 1993). This view drew attention to culture as a process, recognising the active construction of meaning, consistent with sociocultural theories of learning (Lantolf, 2000).

The integration of language and culture

Del Hymes' (Hymes, 1966, 1972) work has been acclaimed as drawing together the two fields of anthropology and linguistics to provide a better understanding of the interrelationship of language and culture (Saville-Troike, 2008). In 1966, he introduced the notion of 'communicative competence' in response to Chomsky's (1965, p. 4) distinction between competence (knowledge of grammatical rules for decoding and producing language) and performance (the use of language in context). Gumperz and Hymes, both sociolinguists, emphasised that language and its analysis are inseparable from the sociological context in which it is used. This drew attention to the interrelatedness of language and culture. They also argued that it is important to understand not just how language is used but the purpose of its use (Gumperz & Hymes, 1972; Hymes, 1972) and to consider what is needed to communicate appropriately within a speech community in order to develop 'communicative competence' (Hymes, 2001). The concept of 'communicative competence' was not only influential in the fields of anthropology and linguistics, but also in second language research and methodologies (Hinkel, 1999).

In the field of SLA, Kramsch (1993a) builds on this idea stating that language and culture constitute a 'dubious dichotomy' in which cultural competence is taught as an extra element in language learning. Language is now more commonly recognised as central to the construction and enactment of culture. It follows that language cannot take place independent of culture (Byram & Morgan, 1994; Corbett, 2003; Lange & Paige, 2003; Paige et al., 1999). The reverse is also true: culture is learnt through language and through language use. The language of the target culture is necessary to gain a fuller understanding of various cultural concepts. Terms such as 'linguaculture' (Attinasi & Friedrich, 1995) or 'languaculture' (Agar, 1994; Risager, 2005) have been

coined in order to recognise the inextricable link between language and culture and this view has become central to ILTL, synonymous with ‘intercultural’ nomenclature.

(b) The position of the language learner

ILTL supports learners’ understanding of how language and culture connect in their first language(s) and in additional languages. The intercultural is a lens through which to view how language and culture shape worldviews, both one’s own and others’. This view of culture and language has implications for language instruction within an ILTL framework: the explicit teaching of culture and its link with language from the beginning is a central part of the process of acquiring language and language skills, and is not a separate component (Liddicoat, 2003; Morgan et al., 2011).

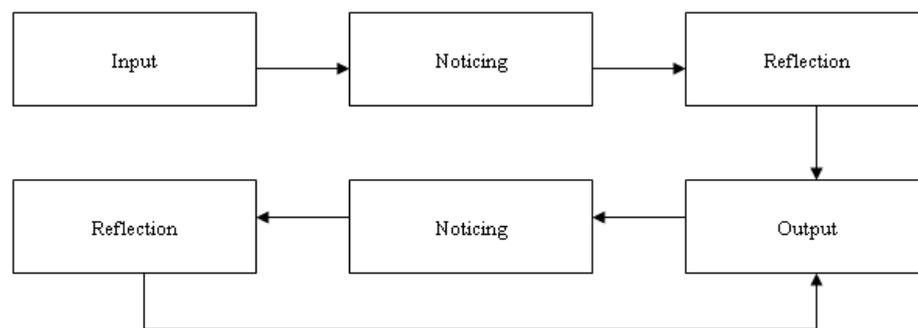
ILTL pedagogy encourages learners to understand their own culture as a starting point for understanding the target culture. It is through self-reflection on one’s first culture that the idea of constructed worldviews tends to be discovered (Crozet, 2007; Liddicoat et al., 2003). Kramersch describes the ‘third place’ (Kramersch, 1993a) which is self-awareness in the language learner concerning their place in developing an understanding of their own culture and the target linguaculture. The ‘third place’ is located between multiple cultures and can be referred to as a ‘meeting place’ in understanding how various worldviews operate. This concept was useful in these earlier discussion of ILTL for explaining the position of the learner in shifting between cultural and linguistic frameworks, however, it has been argued that one cannot be compartmentalised into spaces (Shanahan, 1997) and Kramersch has amended her rendering of the concept of ‘third place’:

...the notion of third culture must be seen less as a PLACE than as a symbolic PROCESS of meaning-making that sees beyond the dualities of national languages (L1-L2) and the national cultures (C1-C2) (Kramersch, 2011, p. 355, original emphasis)

Kramersch’s notion of symbolic competence draws attention to the need for learners to be able to move between languages and cultures as they develop an awareness of the multiple symbolic forms in which communication manifests in cross-cultural encounters. The role of language teachers is to facilitate learners’ understanding and negotiating of opposing values or norms in the target culture compared with the norms of their native culture, as they understand them, in this process. Because such ideas are difficult to teach, this approach has been called an ‘exploration’. The model below

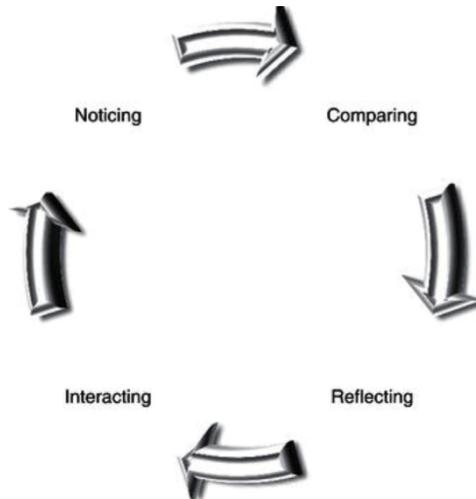
developed by Liddicoat represents the internal process of exploration in language learning (A.J. Liddicoat, 2002b). It describes the cycle of internal negotiation of meaning while a personal model of culture is constructed through exploration.

Figure 2.1: A pathway for developing intercultural competence



A subsequent model of ‘notice-compare-reflect-interact’ extended from Liddicoat’s work. It is introduced as four flexible, overlapping activities (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013; RCLCE, 2007; Scarino & Liddicoat, 2009).

Figure 2.2: Interacting process of intercultural learning



‘Noticing’ is the starting point for further learning and can involve visual, auditory, cognitive affective modes such as those experienced in the practicing and performing RT. Noticing creates opportunities to make comparisons as students bring multiple cultural and linguistic experiences and backgrounds into the classroom. ‘Comparing’ can involve comparing observations, interpretations and reactions, allowing learners to make connections, and make ‘sense’ of what they are experiencing. ‘Reflecting’ involves developing an understanding of one’s own and others’ cognitive and affective responses to difference, assumptions, practices, conflict etc. ‘Interacting’ takes place as learners are both performer and audience of interactions. Therefore it involves being mindful of and managing diversity, as people communicate personal meanings between one another (ILTLP 2007).

The study of language exposes learners to other conceptual systems and ways of viewing the world (Kramersch, 1993a, 2009). One part of this exploration and ongoing reflection is to analyse and talk about language as opposed to just using language. Another element of developing intercultural understanding is the notion of ‘decentring’ from the learner’s first culture. To decentre means to move away from one’s existing identity to view oneself from an outsider’s point of view as a means of acquiring the skills and knowledge to interpret and experience the world from a new contextual framework (Byram, 1989; Kramersch, 1993a).

By decentring, the learner is able to recognise the interplay of existing language(s) and culture(s) with the additional language and culture being learnt. This indicates an

important shift away from the desired goal of language learning being ‘native speaker-like’ competence. Instead the aim is to become an ‘intercultural speaker’ who is comfortable and competent in intercultural contexts, shifting across and between the languages and cultures at play (Byram, 1997; Byram & Zarate, 1994). This acknowledges the learner’s identity in relation to the development of existing cultural frames. It also recognises that learners’ identities are dynamic and that they often understand themselves in multiple ways depending on the cultural context (Kramsch, 1998a, 2009; Kumaravadivelu, 2008, 2012). The learner may then view him or herself as an intercultural speaker or mediator between cultures (Byram, Gribkova, & Starkey, 2002). Because culture is complex and dynamic, learning expands beyond the classroom and the focus is directed towards helping learners to keep learning (Shepard 2000). Successful intercultural language teaching and learning involves students in developing ‘meta-awareness’, by which they continue to monitor, evaluate, analyse and reflect on experiences (Scarino, 2009).

(c) Classroom interactions, experiences and reflection

Classroom practice is inevitably influenced by language learning theories and frameworks. For example, cognitive theories are associated with Grammar Translation methods (Haugh & Liddicoat, 2009), Behaviourism with the Audiolingual Method, and Sociocultural theory with Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) (Morgan et al., 2011).

Communicative based language pedagogy which has dominated language instruction since the 1980s is mainly centred on negotiation and sharing information (Breen & Candlin, 1980; Canale & Swain, 1980; Savignon, 1983) which moves away from the decontextualised learning of language that was part of Translation and Audiolingual methods, yet still falls short of creating classroom experiences encouraging learners to form an understanding of self, others and the world (Morgan et al., 2011). Clear links between language and culture, within Communicative Language Teaching remained tenuous because culture was taught as an extra, rather than inherent, part of language (Scarino, 2009). This approach fails to promote intercultural competence or cross-cultural understanding in the context of language learning (Crozet et al., 1999).

Prabhu (1990) insists that rather than focusing on trying to use certain teaching methods, it is more important to consider whether teaching leads to desired learning. In fact, there have been many discussions about the concept of “method” ever since

Anthony (1963) proposed to distinguish between approach, method and technique. According to Anthony an 'approach' reflects a model or paradigm in relation to views of language, learning and teaching. A 'method' is an overall plan or system for presentation of language compatible with an approach and 'technique' refers to the specific activities used in line with the selected method and technique. For Richards and Rogers (1986) a 'method' is defined to include 'approaches', 'designs' and 'procedures'. Apart from the varying definitions, methods have been criticised as lacking substance and vague (Clarke, 1983), oversimplified and misleading (H. H. Stern, 1983) and constraining (Pennycook 1989). Kumaravadivelu suggests that there has been a shift from method-based pedagogy to postmethod pedagogy in which the teacher is able to use methods eclectically as they see fit for specific learning purposes. He also suggests this has been reflected in a shift towards task-based language teaching, which does not tie teachers down to any one method (Kumaravadivelu, 2006, 2012). While some have pointed out that Kumaravadivelu's notion of 'postmethod' is actually a method (Larsen-Freeman, 2005), Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) suggest the term *stance* to acknowledge that classroom practice is always influenced by some form of knowledge and theoretical positioning (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999; Kumaravadivelu, 2012).

Taking this position allows both teachers and learners to focus on developing an awareness of one's own cultural and linguistic framework, the variability in language and culture and to reflect on the sociopolitical context in which learning is taking place. Within an intercultural perspective the role of the teacher is redefined because teaching and learning for intercultural understanding begins with the teachers' understanding of his or her own enculturation (Crozet & Liddicoat, 1999; Papademetre, 2005; Papademetre & Scarino, 2000).

Kumaravadivelu (2012) suggests a model called KARDS within his post-method approach. While it is not focused directly on the intercultural, it also values diverse and culturally relevant teaching through observations of student need. One section of the model that is particularly relevant to intercultural language teaching and learning is the 'D' of the acronym, which stands for 'doing'. Three elements contribute to the 'doing' module of KARDS: Teaching, Theorising and Dialogising. With regard to the Teaching element, language teachers are considered 'transformative intellectuals' (Giroux, 1988) whose goal is to both to teach students and engage in personal

development, while also recognising their contribution to the shaping and formation of education. The notion of Theorising draws attention to the importance of knowledge derived from the practice of everyday teaching both through reflection and exploratory research. Dialogising speaks to the development of teacher identity through inquiry and in collaboration with the teaching community.

ILTL, while drawing on many of these theoretical perspectives, distinguishes itself from other theoretical frameworks in the field of language learning through the view of language and culture as inextricably linked, the position of the language learner as moving between cultures through noticing and reflecting on observations from the decentred perspective. It also allows for classroom interactions and experiences which are not limited by certain methods, but that encourage students to develop a framework for thinking and talking about language and culture in relation to their own lives and cultural perspectives.

Models for intercultural competence and learning

A number of models have been developed in order to understand intercultural competence and learning. Three models that have been used and researched widely are those drawn from the work of Milton J. Bennett who developed the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS), Michael Byram who developed a Model for Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) and a group working out of the Research Centre for Languages and Culture Education (RCLCE) at the University of South Australia. This group developed a set of principles to guide teaching and learning. These three are considered here, as useful models for the current study.

1. Bennett's model: the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS)

MJ Bennett's model (Bennett, 1993) helps to explain what he describes as the transformative process that learners undergo in their views or understanding of cultural difference as they engage with other cultures and learning additional languages. The DMIS was developed using a grounded theory approach and was based on the identification of patterns that emerged during systematic observation. Bennett identified six stages (Bennett & Bennett, 2004) along a developmental continuum that shifts from 'ethno-centrism' to 'ethno-relativism'. The model specifies affective, behavioural and cognitive patterns that characterise the affective response to cultural difference at each stage.

Figure 2.3 Bennett’s DMIS (Bennett, 1993)

Denial	Defence	Minimisation	Acceptance	Adaptation	Integration
The existence of cultural difference is not considered	Specific cultural differences are recognised in us/them polarization	Cultural difference is trivialised and defined as relatively unimportant	Cultural difference is acknowledged and respected	Skills for relating and communicating are enhanced for effective interactions with others	Internalising two or more cultures – typically takes 3+ years
Ethnocentric stages			Ethnorelative stages		

Ethno-centric stages

1. Denial: This stage is characterised by denial of difference in cultures. The learner’s worldview is formed from their own experiences, which are generally homogenous and ignorant of the existence and characteristics of other cultural groups and languages. Features can range from a lack of awareness, through unintentional isolation, to active separation, in order to maintain a culturally homogeneous environment.
2. Defence: At this stage the ‘other’ and the idea of difference are recognised with some exposure to other languages and cultures, typically with a negative ‘us/them’ mentality. Stereotyping and prejudice can manifest in the form of superiority, denigration or reversal. Superiority is characterised by viewing one’s own values and behaviours in a positive light; and any criticism is perceived as a threat. Denigration, sometimes referred to as ‘negative out-group evaluation’ views other cultures as inferior. Reversal occurs when the other is considered to be superior, sometimes referred to as ‘negative in-group, positive out-group evaluation’.
3. Minimisation: In this stage differences are minimised and the learner focuses on human commonalities. These commonalities include physical universalism, recognising the basic physiological similarities across cultural groups. Another commonality recognised at this stage is ‘transcendent universalism’ including commonalities such as political or spiritual elements that extend across cultures. Differences are often only recognised at a superficial level and are based on what

individuals know from their own cultural stance, rather than from an intercultural awareness of other languages and cultures.

Ethno-relative stages

4. Acceptance: At this stage cultural relativity is accepted with a respect for differences in behaviours and values. The learner recognises his or her own culture as contextualised and understands and appreciates varying behaviours as normal. Respect for difference often starts in noticeable cultural elements referred to as ‘behavioural relativism’ such as non-verbal communication before a respect for cultural values or ‘value relativism’.

5. Adaptation: There is respect for difference and an effort to understand and imagine the other person’s point of view and adapt in contextually appropriate ways. Two dimensions at the Adaption stage are ‘empathy’, whereby the learner tries to accept and understand various worldviews, and ‘pluralism’, where more than one worldview is internalised and one is able to effortlessly transfer between worldviews, in order to act in culturally appropriate ways.

6. Integration: At the integration stage some behaviours and values are integrated in bicultural or multicultural frames of reference. The individual may no longer feel centred in one culture, and this can lead to a sense of marginality with an intercultural identity. However, the learner has the ability to move between and facilitate communication between cultures by shifting cultural perspectives through an understanding of various worldviews.

An instrument called the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) was developed to measure intercultural sensitivity based on the DMIS (Hammer 1998). The IDI is a self-assessment tool, which involves 50-items using a five-point Likert scale. A number of papers to support the reliability and validity the IDI have been published by researchers who were involved in its development (Paige, Jacobs-Cassuto, Yershova, & DeJaeghere, 2003; Hammer, Bennett, & Wiseman, 2003; Hammer 2011). The IDI is the main tool used for measuring Intercultural Sensitivity based on the DMIS.

The main criticism of the DMIS is that it assumes intercultural competence to be progressive and linear. In reality, individuals may experience a complex process of moving back and forth through stages, rather than the simple conceptualisation presented in the model (Perry & Southwell, 2011; Scarino, 2009).

While Bennett's model promotes awareness of the need to develop intercultural sensitivity, it also implies that there is a need, rather than a choice, to adapt to the cultural context (Bodycott & Walker, 2000). It also assumes that intercultural sensitivity is linked to language development and therefore beginning or intermediate learners are necessarily ethnocentric and more advanced learners are necessarily ethnorelative in their orientation. Clearly, readiness to develop intercultural awareness varies from person to person and although many learners develop both language and intercultural competence in tandem, it would be possible that a person with advanced language skills may remain at an early stage of intercultural competence, while hiding attitudes of denial, defence or minimisation. By the same token, the beginning learner could have well developed characteristics of acceptance, adaption and integration as part of their personality, since 'openness to experience' is one of five major identified personality characteristics that are very stable (Costa & McRae, 1985).

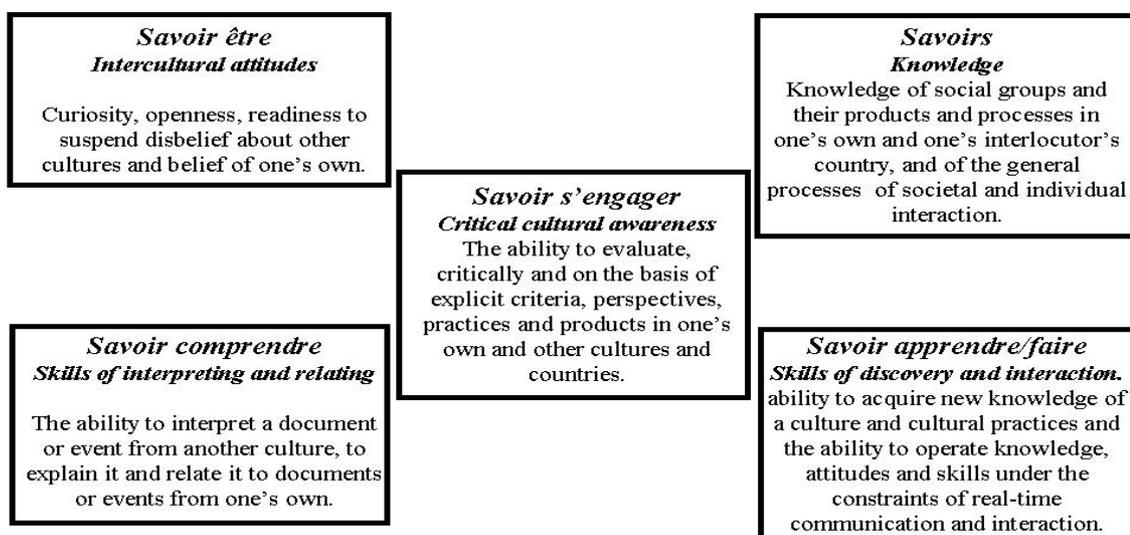
While the model has received a number of criticisms, it is useful for locating the learner's cultural standpoint and for identifying any progressions or significant changes in the learner's intercultural sensitivity (Kohler, 2010; Peckenpaugh, 2013).

2. Byram's Model: Intercultural Communicative Competence

A more developed model in the assessment of intercultural learning is the model of Intercultural Communicative Competence (Byram, 1997; Byram & Zarate, 1994). Initially Byram & Zarate (1994) developed a model including four sets of skills, attitudes and knowledge. These sets that they called *Savoirs*, (knowledge of others and of social processes), *Savoir comprendre* (interpreting, relating, comparing), *Savoir apprendre/faire* (discovery and interaction) and *Savoir être* (valuing others' beliefs and behaviours, curiosity and openness). Byram (1997) later added a fifth *Savoir* – *Savoir s'engager* (critical cultural awareness) - in order to bring a more political component into the model.

The five ‘savoirs’ are displayed in the figure below:

Figure 2.4 Byram’s Savoirs (Byram, 1997)



Byram made the important distinction between ‘intercultural competence’ (IC) and ‘intercultural communicative competence’ (ICC). While intercultural competence (IC) describes the ability to interact with people from other cultures in one’s own language, intercultural communicative competence (ICC) includes the ability to communicate in a foreign language and has therefore had significant influence on the teaching of languages (Byram, 1997).

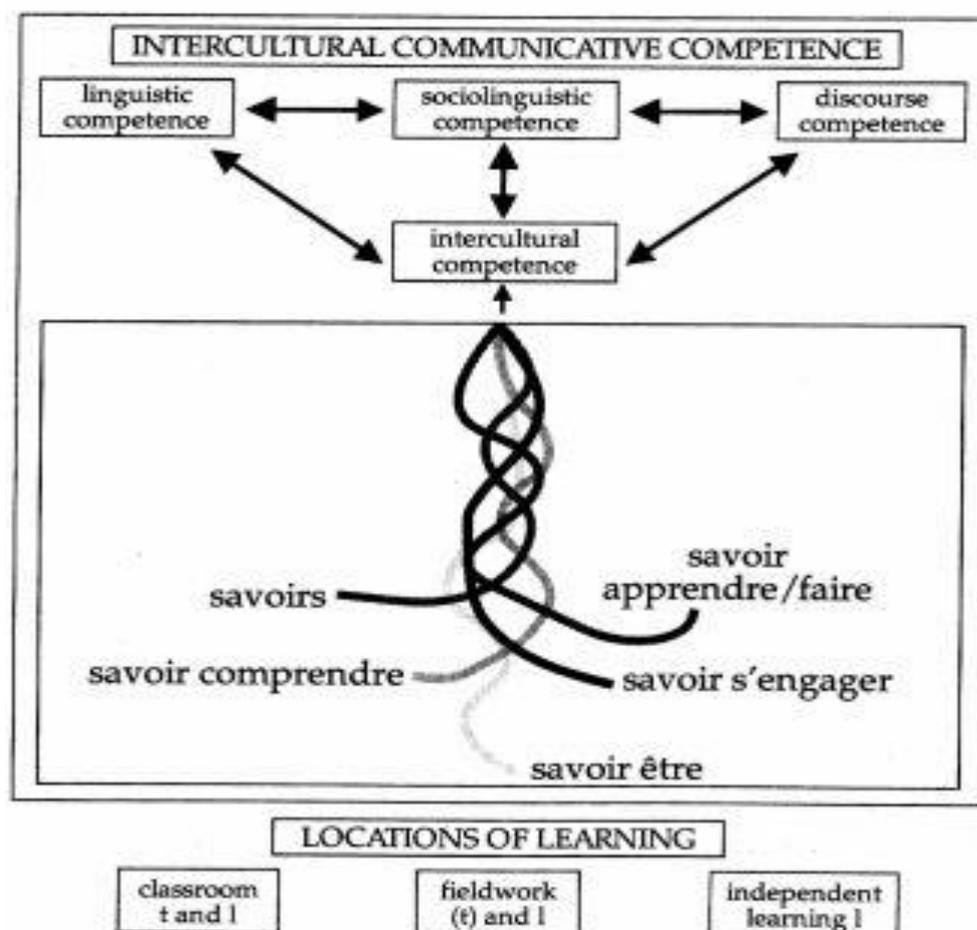
The *savoirs* were conceived in the process of developing what became the Council of Europe’s Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) (Byram, 2009). Byram’s Model (1994; 1997) is integral to the CEFR and therefore one of the most influential across Europe. It has been valued for providing a framework with clearly defined competencies and objectives encouraging structure and planning for intercultural language learning (Gyogi, 2015). In Deardoff’s (2006) Delphi study, involving leading intercultural experts, it was identified as the most comprehensive of the intercultural models.

Perhaps as a result of its wide acceptance, Byram himself states that his model has been ‘widely cited, and less widely, critically evaluated’ (Byram, 2009 p.322). More recently, academics such as Witte (2011), Diaz (2013) and Moeller and Osborn (2014) have drawn attention to the need to investigate the practical implementation of the model in classrooms. Diaz (2011; 2013) draws attention to the importance of adopting a critical approach that is often lost through a focus on ‘competency’. As a

reconstruction of Byram’s ICC model, Stephanie Houghton developed the Intercultural Dialogue Model (ID) (Houghton, 2012; Houghton & Yamada, 2012). Although Houghton’s ID model is not used for this study, it provides a new *savoir*, *savoir se transformer*, introduced to account for the development of the identity of the learner (S. A. Houghton, 2013). The ideas proposed by Houghton correspond with Kumaravadivelu’s “Doing” module of the KARDS model which is concerned with the active transformation of teachers’ practice, theorising and personal development (Kumaravadivelu, 2012).

The elements pertaining to ICC are shown in Figure 2.4b:

Figure 2.4b: Intercultural Communicative Competence (Byram, 1997)



3. Liddicoat et al Model: ‘The Principles for Teaching and Learning from an Intercultural Perspective’

The Principles were first published in the *Report on intercultural language learning* (2003). The report was prepared by the Research Centre for Language and Cultures Education (RELC) and the University of South Australia and the School of Languages and Linguistics at Griffith University - commissioned as part of a national strategy to support Asian languages in Australian schools and to investigate the successful integration of the interrelationship of languages and cultures into teaching and learning (Liddicoat et al. 2003). The five principles of ‘active construction’, ‘making connections’, ‘social interaction’, ‘reflection’ and ‘responsibility’, built on Leo Papademetre’s earlier theorising about principles for intercultural language learning as a precondition for intercultural learning.(Papademetre 1994)

The principles of intercultural language teaching and learning have reappeared in a number of publications by Anthony Liddicoat and Angela Scarino (Liddicoat, 2003; Liddicoat et al., 2003; Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013; Scarino & Liddicoat, 2009).). As described below are identified as the core principles that guide an intercultural perspective:

Figure 2.5 The Principles of Intercultural Language Teaching and Learning (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013; Scarino & Liddicoat, 2009) based on Liddicoat et al., 2003.

General Principle	Description
1. Active construction	Learning involves the purposeful and active construction of knowledge within a sociocultural context of use.
2. Making connections	Learning is based on previous knowledge and requires challenges to initial conceptions that learners bring. The challenges lead to new insights through which learners make connections, to reorganise and extend their existing framework of knowledge.
3. Social interaction	Learning is social and interactive.
4. Reflection	Learning involves becoming aware of the processes underlying thinking, knowing, and learning through conscious awareness and reflection.
5. Responsibility	Learning depends on learners’ attitudes and disposition towards learning.

Part of the rationale behind developing the principles for intercultural teaching and learning is that there is a danger in using models for conceptualisation and analysis through categorisation. That danger is losing sight of the holistic nature of communication and the dynamism of intercultural development, which cannot be divided into a neat and simple inventory of tick-box test items (Papademetre, 1994). Linguistic forms and cultural facts are more easily translated into standardised testing, but standardised testing misses the multi-dimensional, interactional, and longitudinal nature of intercultural learning (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013; Scarino, 2009).

Another feature of the principles is the recognition of interaction as a defining element. Intercultural language learning is developed through communication, which takes place through social and cultural interaction in various contexts. It is essential to elicit individuals' understanding of themselves and cultural contexts through participation in intercultural interactions. (This study is based on the recognition of interaction as a basic requirement for intercultural competence.)

The majority of research that has been conducted using the Principles has been as part of the Intercultural Languages Teaching and Learning Practice (ILTLP) Project, a Government project commissioned by the Department of Education and Training (DEST). The project, which developed a number of training models, included reports from teacher-participants and examples of implementation of the Principles. Diaz (2011) points out that this project was limited to the participants involved, and that there is still a need for a better understanding of how policies surrounding language teaching and learning translate into classroom practice.

Readers' Theatre has all the elements that naturally follow the Principles. Figure 2.6 shows the relationship between the three frameworks, emphasising the different function of each framework.

Figure 2.6 Conceptualising the Relationship between the Three Frameworks for ILTL

<p style="text-align: center;">FOCUS ON TYPES OF KNOWLEDGE</p> <p style="text-align: center;">FOCUS ON DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES</p>					BYRAM'S SAVOIRS	
					<i>Savoir <u>être</u></i>	
					<i>Savoir</i>	
					<i>Savoir <u>comprendre</u></i>	
					<i>Savoir <u>apprendre/faire</u></i>	
					<i>Savoir <u>s'engager</u></i>	
					<i>Savoir <u>se transformer</u></i>	
BENNETT'S DMIS	1 Denial	2 <u>Defence</u>	3 <u>Minimisation</u>	4 Acceptance	5 Adaptation	6 Integration
<p style="text-align: center;">FOCUS ON APPROACHES TO LEARNING</p>					1 Active construction	
					2 Making connections	
					3 Social interaction	
					4 Reflection	
					5 Responsibility	
					THE PRINCIPLES OF ILTL	

Summary

Each of the three major models offers insight into intercultural understanding. All three models will be considered in examining the data, but for the purpose of this study the Principles of Intercultural Language Learning offer, at first examination, the most comprehensive and relevant model because they fit more closely with the study goals of looking at the value of RT as an instructional tool for intercultural language teaching and learning.

Readers' Theatre (RT)

Readers' Theatre has been described as “*creative oral reading which calls forth mental images of characters enacting a scene that exists primarily in the minds of the participants – both the readers' and the audience's.*” (Coger & White, 1967, p. 9). As a minimalist form of theatre, it combines verbal and non-verbal communication in a way that engages learners physically, cognitively and affectively (Haught, 2000). As learners are up on their feet to ‘read’, they also need to make decisions about how to move and how to voice the reading. In contrast to passive reading, by ‘doing’ they are engaged in cognition and metacognition in considering how to position themselves in relation to others, and how to speak to others in a way that more closely parallels ‘real-life’ experience. (Haught, 2000; Ntelioglou, 2011; Rao & Stupans, 2012; Rothwell, 2011).

RT involves the oral presentation of a text by two or more readers. The script is generally divided into two kinds of texts - text spoken by interacting characters, linked by text spoken by narrators that sits around the character interactional texts. Character and narrator parts are distributed among readers who then rehearse the script aloud in preparation for performance. The purpose is not to memorise the script, but to read fluently with appropriate expression, so that the audience can experience the text with characterisation and some level of theatrical effects (Barchers & Pfeffinger, 2007; Coger & White, 1967; Hoyt, 1992; Shepard, 2004). In contrast to traditional forms of theatre the emphasis is not on the stage performance itself, but on bringing the text to life for the audience primarily through voice.

RT traces its origins to interpretive reading that was used in classical Greek performance in the period around 700BCE when epic works such as *The Iliad* and the *Odyssey* were being performed. This was an era in which the ‘spoken word’ was highly valued by society as a central part of religion and culture (Bahn, 1932). In the 15th century, medieval churches similarly used interpretive readings involving characterised actions, symbolic costumes and dialogue in religious worship and chants. The common element between these forms of interpretive reading and RT is the connection with text, which seeks a relationship between the audience and the actors through mental and emotional engagement. (Coger, 1963, p. 162). In the 1950s and 60s in the US and UK, RT was accepted as a form of professional theatrical production (A. Shepard, 2004). It was during this time that it was also recognised for its educational value, initially in

colleges as an experiential form of shared literary interpretation (Coger & White, 1967; Young, 1970), and later at primary school level for its potential to capture student interest through the sharing of stories through animated performance making use of tone of voice, volume, facial expression etc. that engaged the minds and emotions of students while also tying together the skills of reading, writing and spelling (Sloyer, 1982).

Models of RT

Drama teaching sometimes distinguishes between process and product drama (O'Toole, 2003). Product drama is self-explanatory: the focus is on the 'finished product', which is reached through a process of rehearsal. By contrast, process drama focuses on the process of developing the actors' skills (Haught, 2000). RT is a form of process drama (Liu, 2000). It can be used to help students to develop their imagination, build voice, create authentic experiences and to see the world from multiple perspectives (Schneider & Jackson, 2000).

There are many different ways of enacting RT. A common model involves readers taking fixed positions in a line or semi-circle, facing or at an angle to the audience. Scripts are held in one hand or often placed on stands in front of the readers. This model restricts physical movement more than a traditional play (Hughes & Arnold, 2008; Sloyer, 1982). A more developed model allows characters to move around while performing while the narrators remain stationary. Characters can look at one another as they perform. They hold the script in one hand while the other remains free to make relevant gestures (Shepard, 2004).

Both models maintain an emphasis on non-verbal aspects of performance, such as use of face, voice and body to communicate the actions and feelings of the characters. The effective use of non-verbal resources is key to helping observers to visualise a stage, costumes and props so that they can create their own 'theatre of the imagination' (Coger & White).

This study followed a developed model of RT. Participants worked together in groups as they engaged in the process of experimenting with negotiating the enactment of the scripts through use of voice, pacing, gestures, facial expression etc. Towards the end of each session there was an in-class performance in which each group 'performed' for the other. A significant extension of the model of RT used in this particular study was

extended time given to discussion around key issues raised in the texts and performances.

Texts for RT

Readers' Theatre is usually the performance of written texts, which have been scripted. The process of scripting usually takes place after the introduction of a written text in its original form. This style of educational drama is referred to as 'dramatizing at the centre of a text', meaning that the performance is truer to the intent of the original text, rather than digressing from or elaborating on the original story (Wolf et al., 1997, p. 494).

RT can be used with a variety of genres and text types including fictional texts such as poems, a scene from a play, songs (Black & Stave, 2007) short stories and myths (Shepard, 2004), and non-fiction texts such as articles, speeches, biographies (Young & Vardell, 1993) science text books (Kinniburgh & Shaw, 2007) mathematics textbooks, journal entries and historical documents (Black & Stave, 2007; Flynn, 2004).

Functional guidelines, for teachers who are selecting texts, include deciding whether the text is interesting, engaging and intellectually stimulating for the group (Martinez et al., 1998; Worthy & Prater, 2002). Behnke also suggests looking at the quality of the literature and at its potential to emotionally engage both performers and observers (Behnke, 1968).

The basic procedure used in most classroom contexts is to select and read the text, write the script, practise and perform it, and then to reflect on the performance and the significance of the texts in terms of ideas presented and the language used. In my classroom however, I made more of the reflection phase in particular by drawing attention to social and cultural elements presented in the texts and in asking participants to relate these their own experiences and understandings.

Many teachers use ready-made materials available on websites or books before moving on to writing scripts based on texts studied in class (Worthy & Prater, 2002). For the purposes of this study, because time was limited, pre-developed scripts deemed helpful in initiating discussion around cultural aspects of the texts, which could be related to participants' lives were selected. Sessions generally began with discussion around themes presented in the text and introduction of any vocabulary from the text that was likely to be new or unfamiliar. This was followed by reading through the whole text

aloud as a class with opportunities for questions. The class was then divided into groups formed according to the number of roles in each text. During repeated readings, students were encouraged to incorporate non-verbal communication to express the full meaning of the script - gesture, voice and facial expressions. There was about half an hour allocated to the process of practicing in groups and during this time, students repeated the script approximately five to seven times either as a whole group or focusing on their own parts. Every session finished with performances of the text by each group and was rounded up with discussion in relation to the themes in the text and or the performance itself. The whole group discussions were one of the major sources of insight into participants' intercultural awareness and processes of development over the course of their participation in RT.

Readers Theatre Research

Martinez, Roser & Strecker (1998) first investigated the role of RT in developing oral reading fluency (Martinez et al., 1998). Results from their study combined with findings from numerous subsequent studies support the use of RT for developing oral reading fluency through the creation of a real purpose for repeated readings (Clark, 2006; Clark, Morrison, & Wilcox, 2009; Frazee, 2014; Griffith & Rasinski, 2004; Keehn, 2003; Miller & Schwanenflugel, 2008; Millin & Rinehart, 1999; Mraz et al., 2013). This extends to reading fluency in content areas such as history and science (Clementi, 2010; Kinniburgh & Shaw, 2007) and for developing reading fluency as well as confidence and comprehension with struggling readers (Chard & Tyler, 2000; Peebles, 2007; Rinehart, 2001) and special education students (Corcoran & Davis, 2005; Garrett & O'Connor, 2010).

Another aspect of RT noted in the literature is its potential to increase student motivation and positive affect (Worthy & Prater, 2002) through cooperative learning (Liu, 2000; Rinehart, 1999; Worthy & Broadus, 2001) and the incorporation of movement with reading (Peebles, 2007; Visser & Edge, 2013). Vasinda & McLeod (2011) also found that combining RT with technology in the form of podcasting was a highly motivating experience for students (Vasinda & McLeod, 2011).

Interest in RT as method for teaching reading at primary level grew significantly after the 2000 US enquiry into national literacy identified reading fluency as a critical area for effective instruction in the National Reading Panel Report (National Reading Panel, 2000). RT was subsequently incorporated into the *No Child Left Behind* Act and the

Reading First Federal initiative as a way to improve levels of student reading fluency (Black & Stave, 2007; Kirkland & Patterson, 2005; Rasinski & Hoffman, 2003).

However, as will be shown in the next section, which considers RT in the context of additional language learning, RT has the potential to help learners to see the new language in a dynamic dimension different from formulaic grammar structures (Kramsch, 1993; Hsu, 2011; Kiray, 2013; Tsou 2011). In particular they have the opportunity to notice, compare and reflect on cultural similarities and differences presented in texts and to draw on their personal experiences (Kao, Carkin, & Hsu, 2011). In doing so, there is the potential for a heightened awareness and understanding of the cultural variations that exist amongst the participants (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013). By making reference to their own languages and cultures, participants can explore ideas around the interrelatedness of language and culture and their significance in shaping their own and others' worldviews (Liu, 2000; Yeh 2014). As such, RT appears to be an underutilised teaching strategy with wide implications for ILTL.

Readers' Theatre in the Context of SLA

There is a history of using RT for teaching English as a Second Language (ESL), and RT is recognised as an effective teaching strategy (Hsu, 2011; Hsueh, 2009; Liu, 2000; Ng & Boucher-Yip, 2010; Tian & Wu, 2012).

In ESL teaching, RT is often utilised whereby students undertake repeated readings in a cooperative space, where they can observe and be observed by other group members, and where different ability levels can be accommodated by the selection of more or less challenging roles. One theory for the potential effectiveness of drama in SLA contexts is based on the creation of a positive 'affective space' (Piazzoli, 2011). Piazzoli, in a study with 3rd year advanced level students studying at a university in Brisbane Australia, found that traditional language instruction that focused on form and accuracy tended to create language anxiety for some students. She argues that the affective space is important because of its potential to improve the quality of the learning experience: "*A supportive atmosphere enables participants to take risks within the drama that can trigger experiential learning*" (p562).

In the early 2000s RT was systematically introduced to elementary school teachers of English in schools in Taiwan as a response to low levels of English amongst Taiwanese students who had limited opportunities to practise spoken English in large classes (Hsu,

2011). Therefore, a number of studies on the use of RT for SLA have been conducted in the context of elementary level English language classes in Taiwan

RT is an attractive teaching option in SLA because it incorporates many of the strategies for language teaching that are known to be effective. Effective strategies include a) creating collaborative learning communities, b) engaging in instructional conversation c) using multiple representations, d) building on prior knowledge and maintaining culturally responsive instruction (Télez & Waxman, 2006). Some of the findings from these and other studies investigating the use of RT support Tellez and Waxman's (2006) strategies for effective learning and include:

a) Creating collaborative learning communities

Hsu (2011) investigated the implications of using RT in English language classes at elementary schools in Taiwan. She used a multiple-case study, following three experienced teachers to gain insight into best practice for using RT in regular classrooms. Data in the form of classroom observations, interviews and teaching materials such as scripts and evaluation forms were collected and analysed using a Grounded Theory approach. The findings from the study identified opportunities for the promotion of cooperative, student-centred learning and diversification to accommodate different levels of proficiency as some of the most successful strategies for conducting RT.

Another study conducted in the context of Taiwan by Wu and Yang (2012) reported that low performing elementary students showed increased motivation and reduced levels of anxiety when they experienced rehearsal and peer cooperation in RT. Video recorded oral reading tests, interviews and observations were used in a six-stage intervention measure the development of low-level readers through participation in RT. As well as indicating the significant role of positive affect through collaboration, the participants also developed their oral reading fluency and silent reading abilities (Wu & Yang, 2012).

Wenli Tsou (2011), also in Taiwan, used a mixed-method approach to measure reading and writing proficiency in two fifth grade classes after one semester of participating in RT. The intervention group performed significantly better than the control group in reading accuracy and fluency. Along with this they also highlighted increased motivation, a purpose for student interaction and collaboration in presenting to an

audience through the use of RT (Tsou, 2011). The qualitative data revealed increased student confidence and positive attitudes towards working with peers and toward learning English. The quantitative element of the study found that results for sentence structure were not as strong for the intervention group as for the control group, a finding that may have been due the focus on drilling in the control group.

While none of these studies set out to specifically measure the effects or explore the role of peer cooperation as part of RT, each study comments specifically on the impact on students of working in a collaborative community for learning.

b) Engaging in instructional conversation

Kao, Carkin & Hsu (2011), conducted a study working with Taiwanese college students who had taken part in an intensive summer English language course. The course was designed to assist the participants with developing oral proficiency and general competence through engaging with drama activities. Specifically, they investigated the role of questioning when using process drama and RT by analysing transcriptions of audio and video recorded classes using eight questioning functions. Their findings showed that in contrast to traditional approaches, drama activities facilitated more interactive questioning, encouraging students to engage in instructional conversation. They also observed that the participants who had taken part in the RT intervention gradually changed to become more involved and responsive in their roles. Furthermore, they were more interactive with each other while out of their roles and more willing to contribute by raising questions and answering questions spontaneously (Kao, Carkin, & Hsu, 2011).

c) Using multiple representations and perspectives

Ellen Yeh (Yeh, 2014) identifies RT as one of the activities incorporated into the Multiple Intelligences Film Teaching (MIFT) model she developed based on Gass and Mackey's concept of interactional feedback (Gass & Mackey, 2006). Interactive feedback involves student negotiation with the teacher to encourage self-correction (also a form of b – engagement in instructional conversation - mentioned above). RT was used as a form of Multiple Intelligence instruction, which acknowledges the need for differentiation to cater for varying forms of intelligence. These include linguistic, logical-mathematical, visual and spatial, musical and rhythmic, body and kinaesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal and naturalistic intelligences (Gardner, 1993). Her paper

categorises RT as helping to develop English as a Second or foreign language learners' linguistic, musical, kinaesthetic and interpersonal intelligences through using social, embodied and vocal representations of various texts. While the study is not an investigation of the ways in which RT contributes to intercultural language learning, she suggests that RT may have the potential to contribute to intercultural competence (Yeh, 2014).

RT was approached in a similar way in Kiray's (2013) study which had a focus on genre based writing skills with students studying English at secondary school in Turkey. It was a qualitative study that explored writing activities in the textbooks that are used with 9th and 10th grade learners in Turkey. RT was analysed as part of the 'performance task' sections that contributed to each main chapter as a means of using multiple representations of text. Kiray drew attention to the imaginative function of RT, meaning that it can be used to 'create new worlds' potentially assisting students to view the text as a communicative product (Kiray, 2013, p. 173). This approach which involved linking written text with creative expression in oral performance shares similarities with the current study, however, it does not incorporate intercultural discussion into the exploration of the imaginative function of RT.

d) Building on prior knowledge and maintaining culturally responsive instruction

Claire Kramersch (Kramersch, 1993a) used RT to explore the various layers of context with her class of intermediate-level German students at a university in the United States. She used texts that had been scripted by herself as the teacher. The students were instructed to negotiate the roles and style of performance prior to assigning roles, practising and performing. She noted that, as students engaged in discussion incorporating views in relation to their various backgrounds and life experiences, the discussion revealed variation in their interpretations of the text. Discussions also raised students' attentiveness to linguistic, interactional and cultural elements of the text, which increased students' cultural responsiveness. Kramersch also noted the intimacy that developed within the group throughout the process of RT (Kramersch, 1993a).

Jun Liu (Liu, 2000) conducted an exploratory study in which RT was used within a university ESL literature and writing course, also based in the United States. Data were collected in the form of the researcher's reflexive notes, student journals, a survey in response to the RT experience and samples of student writing post RT. This was done with a group of fourteen students from various countries of origin over a ten-week

course. Liu found that RT had various positive effects; it helped learners engage with learning, reflect on the relevance of the text, develop language abilities and it also encouraged self-initiated learning. He noted that RT created various opportunities for cooperative and supportive learning, which helped students develop social competence and confidence for communicating with students from other cultural backgrounds. While his study was directed at exploring RT's potential for teaching writing, findings from his study point towards RT's potential for enhancing cultural awareness and sensitivity in intercultural contexts (Liu, 2000).

However, while Kramersch in her writing in the early 1990s writes about the use of RT and engages with the importance of the intercultural, there do not appear to be any other studies that explore the potential of RT for ILTL. The present study aims to build on the work of Kramersch (1993a) in contributing to the field by helping to fill that gap.

Readers' Theatre in the Context of ILTL

While there are no published studies that explore the use of RT for ILTL, it is clear that there are elements of RT that can potentially enhance ILTL. These include:

1. engaging with texts as a way of drawing attention to cultural similarities and differences and exploring multiple perspectives
2. allowing each student to make choices for representing the social and cultural world in meaningful action
3. asking students to reflect on how context and culture influences communication and behaviour in their performances and in their own lives.

1. Engagement with text for ILTL

Literary texts can provide an insight into the target culture through language and act as a non-threatening starting point for discussions about culture. The repeated reading in RT for ILTL does not simply focus on the text itself, but uses the text as an opportunity to reflect on understanding one's own and the target culture and engaging in these critically and reflectively (Kramersch, 1993a).

Liddicoat and Scarino (2013) note that traditionally texts have been used in language learning simply to provide linguistic input or as a stimulus for language production. They, amongst others, make a call for the recognition of literature as an important source for viewing texts as cultural products that emerge from language in use. The

judicious choice of literary texts for RT allows students to gain insight into the various social, political, historic and symbolic elements of culture as presented within the text (Maley, 2012; Schewe, 1998) While literary texts are clearly not representative of a whole society, and can only portray a 'slice' of various cultural views, beliefs and backgrounds through the behaviours and characteristics of individuals presented in text, they nevertheless introduce diverse perspectives on the world (Andringa, 1996). This provides a cognitively and emotionally engaging learning experience that avoids an over simplified teaching of cultural 'facts' (Maley, 2012; Wąsikiewicz-Firlej, 2012).

Carter has addressed the importance of reading processes when engaging with literature in language learning, and points to 'textual transformations' such as the textual to dramatic transformation used in RT (Carter, 2007). He notes that these transformations contribute significantly to understanding the meanings of text as they inspire an appreciation for the diverse interpretations and perspectives of text presented by students.

Kern (2002) notes the need to find a place, such as RT, for reconciling the teaching of language and literature through discussion facilitated all of the reciprocal relations of readers, writers, texts, culture and language learning by engaging with text (Kern, 2002, p. 21).

Freebody and Hughes (2012) draw attention to the possibilities for opening and extending discussion in relation to the texts when using drama and Kramersch (1993a), likewise, suggests that RT invites students to consider their own cultural and linguistic location in relation to the target culture as presented in the text. This opportunity for learners to discuss and explore their own and each other's backgrounds and cultures in a classroom space represents their growth and change as they engage with new ideas and perspectives which cause reorientation of previous views or perspectives (Burwitz-Melzer, 2001). Carr sees this type of discussion as having transformative potential for students as they engage in exploratory, reflective and sometimes even unsettling dialogue (Carr, 1999). This is the type of discussion that is geared towards the goals of both intercultural language learning and drama teaching. Scarino and Liddicoat (2009, p. 21) have suggested that "*the goal of learning is to decentre learners from their own culture-based assumptions and to develop an intercultural identity as a result of engagement with an additional culture...*". Similarly, Byram and Flemming (1998) suggest the goal of drama is to enable participants to make sense of contextualised

human behaviour and revise values, beliefs and behaviours through the process of reflection.

2. Contextualisation, co-construction and embodiment

In RT learners are engaged in a highly social process of collaboration, negotiation and performance (Wu & Yang, 2012; Tsou, 2011; Yeh, 2014). At the same time it is also a very subjective physical, emotional and cognitive experience (Flynn, 2004; Roth, 2001; Shepard 1997; Kramsch 1993, 2006, 2009; Yeh, 2014). Nunan explains this experience of learning language in this way:

Only by studying language in its social and cultural contexts, will we come to appreciate the apparent paradox of language acquisition: that it is at once a deeply personal and yet highly social process (Nunan, 1992b, p. 23).

Here, Nunan points to the importance of social and cultural elements in the process of successful individual learning. RT creates a contextualised teaching and learning environment through the performance of culturally situated texts (Kramsch, 1993). As part of the process of RT, learners participate in peer-to-peer questioning, analysis, negotiation, modelling, making suggestions etc. as the group or ‘ensemble’ collaborate in practicing their respective parts which contribute to the performance of text as a whole (Neelands & Goode, 2000). Sociocultural theories of situated learning support the notion that learning takes place when knowledge is co-constructed as social process, such as the interactions that takes place during RT. They also focus on participation in social practices often attached to a particular contextualised time and place, such as those provided by RT texts (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

Knowledge is co-constructed and learners’ understanding of texts is deepened when written skills are transferred to oral skills, such as in the performance of text in RT (Haggstrom, 1992; Neelands & Goode, 2000). Such performance also contributes to developing cultural knowledge and experiences (Byrnes & Kord, 2001; G. Hall, 2005). The transfer of skills through social interaction facilitates the simultaneous participation and acquisition of language. Learners both acquire knowledge and skills while also engaging in the active use of language through performance. These are elements that have too often been separated in SLA (Sfard, 1998). The performative element also requires the learner to develop both cognitive and imaginative skills,

which contribute to an understanding of cultural practices and meanings as presented in the text (Byram & Fleming, 1998; ILTLP Project, 2007).

In performance of RT texts, the co-construction of knowledge is extended to non-verbal communication as it requires learners to embody the language presented in the text. Non-verbal communication generally refers to the translation of meaning without involving words, which can include pitch, speed, tone, volume, gestures and facial expressions, body posture, stance, proximity to the listener, eye movement, eye contact, dress, appearance, and smell. It is also used to express emotions, communicate interpersonal attitudes and to reinforce (or contradict) speech (Argyle, 1983; 1988; 2013).

When it comes to using non-verbal communication outside of one's usual cultural experience, let alone a new language, it can be confronting (Orton, 2006). The cultural subtleties of non-verbal communication which come into play as part of "indirect speech acts", described by Searle as when "the speaker communicates to the hearer more than he actually says by way of relying on shared background information, both linguistic and non-linguistic" (Searle, 1975, pp. 60-61), are difficult to discern. There are arguments for making non-verbal communication an integral part of language teaching and learning. It is important for developing cultural awareness and competence (Green, 1971; Gullberg, 2006; Gullberg & McCafferty, 2008; Jungheim, 2006). Furthermore, studies show it facilitates language acquisition (Allen, 1999) and listening comprehension (Cabrera & Martínez, 2001).

While on the one hand, performance is highly social and interactive, at the same time, the embodiment of text is also a very subjective cognitive, physical and emotional experience. For instance, the real-time enactment of text involves a conscious awareness of other and understanding of other performers' words and actions. It also involves making personal decisions about how to appropriately and effectively represent a character, which contributes to reflexive awareness of self (Roth, 2001).

Rothwell (2011) similarly suggests that the enactment of text through non-verbal communication is essential for expressing emotion and attitude and encourages an emotional connection through performance. Jensen and Hermer (1998, p. 179) also argue that a form of learning that engages a sensory, physical and emotional engagement, such as RT, can provide a richer engagement with the target language and

culture for the individual than a focus on just the cognitive elements of learning languages, based on grammar analysis, memorising vocabulary and translating text.

3. Reflection on context and culture

Analysis and reflection are characteristic of high quality teaching and learning. Both RT and ILTL try to encourage students to be analytical and reflective in practice.

RT helps students to bridge the gap between the use of language in the classroom and in everyday life. This is because performance involves carefully considering and imagining the characters' personality traits, and how various events and circumstances may influence thoughts and emotions of the characters they present (Fels & McGivern, 2002). To communicate these emotions and attitudes effectively, learners are likely to draw on their own life experiences as a source of insight, helping them to connect personally to the language and expression (Busching, 1981; Wagner, 2002; Wolf et al., 1997). As the students establish an emotional connection with events in the script as they are performed, the teacher can encourage the learners to question and reflect on areas of their own lives. Cope and Kalantzis (2009, pp. 175-178) argue that classrooms should create links between learning and real life situations so that learners can integrate the familiar and the new. This process should involve creating situations in which students can analyse their experiences, both conceptually and functionally, and apply their knowledge in authentic situations such as those located in the scripts used in RT.

Byram and Flemming (1998, p. 143) suggest that performance is the ideal context for exploring and analysing one's own and other cultural values, because it draws the participant in through emotional engagement, while at the same time it provides a safe distance from reality through imagination and make-believe. Piazzoli (2011, p. 562) refers to this as safe atmosphere created in performance as 'affective space'.

Edmiston (2011, p. 227), drawing on the work of Dorothy Heathcote and James Britton, describes this moving between the public sphere and private self as developing an analytical stance in which learners shift from the role of 'participants' to the role of 'spectators'. This requires the participant to detach from being 'in role' and become a 'self-spectator' in performance. Similarly, Morgan (2007) identifies the close parallels to issues of identity and reflexivity in performance, both of which are needed for

intercultural competence. Drawing on her work, Scarino and Liddicoat (Scarino, 2009; 2007) suggest it is necessary to:

1. Engage students in using the target language in variable contexts (students as performers), and exploring how they explain the intercultural (students as analysers)
2. Include both self-assessment and feedback from peers in the construction of knowledge and identity
3. Emphasise self-awareness as a performer.

It is precisely these goals that this study attempts to achieve through RT.

RT also allows learners to extend themselves to imagine and analyse various events in the social world, based on events and actions presented in the text. This encourages a broader contextual understanding of social and cultural appropriateness, extending especially to the questioning of moral and ethical values (Fels & McGivern, 2002; Saxton, 2012). Edmiston and Winston (Edmiston, 2000, 2011; Winston, 1996, 1998, 1999) also recognise drama's potential for ethical and moral questioning through engaging the learner's imagination (Fels & McGivern, 2002; Garrett & O'Connor, 2010). When drama is used for transformational learning it can lead to discomfort, reflection, consideration of other perspectives and engagement in embodied experiences. All of these experiences firmly establish learning that endures. These are the types of learning experiences needed for developing responsibility for both successful intercultural communication and the development of an intercultural stance.

The emphasis in RT for ILTL is on developing awareness of the nature of intercultural interaction and the skills to interact successfully, and to keep on developing in competence and confidence. Byram and Fleming (1998) point out that the goal of learning for the 'intercultural speaker' is for the learner to develop independence from the instructor and the limits of the classroom. This independence is essential preparation for flourishing within a new linguistic and cultural environment.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

There is a danger in trying to compartmentalise a complex concept like culture, while trying to retain a sense of its whole. Culture is a complex system of interrelated parts that must be understood holistically (Moran, Abramson, & Moran, 2014, p. 15)

Research Methodology

As noted in the literature review, sociocultural and intercultural perspectives both place the real life use of language in social interactions at the heart of learning (Byram 2002, 2012). The sociocultural perspective emphasises the importance of the social milieu for language learning (and indeed all learning) while intercultural theory examines the many ways in which our existing cultural and linguistic perspectives influence our interaction with, and understanding of additional cultures and languages.

These perspectives are important for understanding students' language learning because they look at learners' own construction of meaning both internally and through social interaction (Zuengler & Miller, 2006); learners' ability to understand themselves as located in a language(s) and culture(s), and their realisation that this is also true for others; meaning that their lens for interaction and understanding is therefore different from our own.

Both intercultural and sociocultural paradigms take into account the lived reality of engaging in social interactions in which multiple perspectives are present in the context of varying languages and cultures (Scarino & Crichton, 2007, p.3). Epistemologically the subjective experience and construction of meaning by the learner is valued just as much as knowledge of objective facts (Atkinson, 1999; Gipps, 1994; Jiménez Raya & Sercu, 2007; Sercu, 2002). Therefore, by selecting an intercultural approach as the guiding theoretical framework of this study of RT, it allows insight into the variable ways in which subjective experiences are shaped as part of learning that takes place both through social interaction and internally through taking part in RT.

Acknowledging how complex it is to learn to take an intercultural stance is a key reason for noticing RT's potential for ILTL; RT can be used to embody and explore the diversity of cultural experience to develop a more holistic understanding of the idea of

having a lens for interaction. RT also provides the opportunity to discuss and reflect on theirs and others' subjective experiences. This study therefore required an approach to gaining an in-depth understanding of whether and how the participants were developing this kind of understanding. Taking the role of participant researcher through the RT intervention allowed for detailed observation and insight into participants' behaviours and interview responses. The evidence was sought through examining and analysing statements made in group discussions and in individual reflection that were collected pre, during and post RT intervention.

Research Design

The data collected in this study were directed toward addressing these questions:

1. In what ways might the teaching and learning affordances of RT contribute to intercultural language teaching and learning?
2. To what extent do the frameworks that have been identified as underpinning ILTL help to explain and support the use of RT in helping both teachers and students?

The research design was guided by qualitative research paradigms and methods to answer the research questions. The method chosen for the research was a case study approach which included the participants' experiences of Readers' Theatre, aligned with, and analysed in relation to, intercultural theoretical models and principles.

A case study approach

This type of research is valuable both for the professional researcher and teacher alike because it involves in-depth investigation into how learners learn (McDonough & McDonough, 2014). Merriam has said that *'the qualitative case study can be defined as an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single entity, phenomenon or social unit. Case studies are particularistic, descriptive, and heuristic and rely heavily on inductive reasoning in handling multiple data source.'* (Merriam 1988 p16). Case study research takes into account the various contextual and cultural factors that influence human experience and behaviour. It is a valuable resource to the teacher-researcher particularly in understanding contemporary, in-context phenomena in order to improve practice (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Merriam, 1998; van Lier, 2005; Yin, 2009). These insights are often difficult to capture in more context-independent studies (Flyvbjerg, 2006). As Johnson, cited in van Lier (2005), states,

Case studies can provide rich information about an individual learner. They can inform us about the process and strategies that individual L2 [second language] learners use to communicate and learn, how their personalities, attitudes and goals interact with the learning environment, and about the precise nature of their linguistic growth (1992, p.76).

A range of different research methods can be used to carry out case study research. Stake (2008) maintains that it can be conducted “*analytically or holistically, entirely by repeated measures or hermeneutically, organically or culturally, and by mixed methods – but we concentrate ... on the case*” (p. 121). For this study, the case being investigated was Readers’ Theatre in the context of a university preparatory course. In order to better understand how participants engaged with the RT intervention and the influence this had on their intercultural understanding, I undertook an initial focus group session, observations of the RT intervention and a series of interviews with select students.

As well as the three student interviews I took notes throughout the study (see Appendix). These were complementary in revealing different kinds of learning that participants experienced. The value and limitations of each of the methods used in this study will be discussed below.

Using a focus group

A focus group session held prior to the RT sessions helped to ‘set the scene’, by gathering data from the whole group and the experiences of ILTL recounted by individual students, as well as from the three interview participants. Deardoff (2011) suggests that focus groups provide a good method for obtaining indirect evidence of students’ perceptions of intercultural learning and competence. For this study, the focus group provided the perfect setting for exploring the social and cultural factors that underpin intercultural communication for this particular group of learners. That is, students from two distinctively different cultures - China and Saudi Arabia - that are, in turn, different from mainstream cultures in Australia and in Australian universities. The focus group provided an opportunity for interacting, connecting, thinking about self in relation to languages and cultures, reflecting on language use and learning and considering how to work with others responsibly. In short, it was an opportunity for each student to reflect critically on how she or he was learning and responding to language learning, and to consider this in relation to the thoughts and talk of others.

Another benefit of using focus groups is that they are a time efficient means of data collection with the potential to cover a range of participant' ideas and perspectives. They also allow for conversations generated by the participants themselves (Burns, 1990; Curtis & Curtis, 2011; Morgan, 1998). Student-generated conversation is also an opportunity for students to get to know each other before, during and parallel to the education program opportunities.

One of the drawbacks of using focus groups is that it is easy for the researcher to gain an impression of a false consensus by giving special attention to students who are more dominant in small group discussion (Chan, 2009). Care needs to be taken to balance the group dynamic with appropriate encouragement, questions for clarification, and by recognising how individual participants' personalities tend to shape the conversation. Providing multiple opportunities for others to add to ideas that arise in the group helps to ensure that everyone has a chance to speak. The follow-up interviews also enabled me to ensure that individual students had the chance to express themselves freely one-to-one and to follow up tentative lines of inquiry without having to adjust these lines to the lines of inquiry of others, as is the case in the context of a focus group discussion. The focus group data complements the individual interviews by providing data sets which are taken from different approaches and in different forums of social interaction.

Observing and Recording the Intervention

During the RT intervention I functioned as teacher researcher and participant observer. This approach is traditionally associated with action research, which has become a popular form of investigation in the field of education (Burns, 2010; Nunan, 1992a). It has grown in popularity out of the desire of educators to better understand the processes of learning through observation rather than looking at the product (Strickland, 1988) and shifts teaching from mere practice to reflexive praxis (AFMLTA, 2012; Orland-Barak, 2010). It also differs from traditional positivistic research, which tends to value the researcher as the primary source of knowledge. Instead it recognises that to understand the participants' perceptions, the researcher must understand a suitable framework within which to interpret their feelings, thoughts and actions (Wilson, 1977). The use of participant observation in this study involved many points of data collection over a four-month period: pre-intervention focus group, five sessions of intervention and two post intervention sessions. This series of data collected over time enabled me to take account of temporal changes that could be "immediate, gradual,

delayed or residual” and to account for variation between ‘cases’ over time (Mellow, Reeder, & Forster, 1996, p. 327).

By taking the teacher researcher role, I was able to carefully observe the ways in which each participant engaged with the RT scripts as they read, spoke and embodied them. I gained insight into the relationship dynamics and cultural differences that existed within the group as interactions were taking place. Eisenhardt (2002) suggests this type data collection, whereby the taking of notes with other forms of data collection overlap, is a key element of building theory from cases. In the role of teacher researcher, I was able to avoid the problem of students changing their behaviour in response to obtrusive observation. However, participants may still have been influenced by the Hawthorne Effect, whereby participants unconsciously alter their behaviour due to the awareness that they are participating in a study (Mackey & Gass, 2005). In the context of the current study, this could have resulted in participants viewing the experience as a novelty and therefore have been more willing to engage than under regular circumstances. This possibility was almost certainly mitigated by the extended period in which we worked together and their familiarity with me as their ‘regular’ teacher. Video-recording the intervention enabled me to go back and refresh my memory of the process and of students’ behaviour in the RT sessions. Through re-watching the video data I was able to develop my familiarity with their language resources and listen for recurring motifs, which helped to deepen my understanding of the communication of meaning that took place within those interactions.

Researcher’s notes (see Appendix)

The development of intercultural sensitivity is not only a challenge for students; the educator must constantly reflect on the process in response to learners’ development (Paige, 2004). Kramsch (1998) describes the need for the teachers to be both consciously aware and reflective on cultural dynamic during the teaching and learning process. She uses the metaphor of merchants at sea to describe the exciting process of entering into uncharted territory together with students within an intercultural orientation:

As intercultural speakers, learners are likely to engage their teachers in a voyage of discovery for which they don’t always feel prepared. Allowing students to become intercultural speakers, therefore, means encouraging teachers to see themselves, too, as brokers between cultures of all kinds. (Kramsch, 1998b, p. 30).

Moloney, in support of Kramersch's ideas, found a clear link between the intercultural competence of teachers and their students arguing that teachers often subconsciously both model and facilitate intercultural awareness (Moloney, 2008). For this study, the researcher kept observational and reflective notes on the RT intervention as a way of identifying any useful insights into the experience of RT from the teacher's point of view.

Other alternatives

Collecting data from the interviews, the focus group and the RT sessions themselves provided multiple sources for increased insights and varied perspectives for analysis.

There were other possibilities for data collection that were considered and rejected. For example, there are psychometric instruments that have been created to measure intercultural competence. Examples are the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) of the Behavioural Assessment Scale for Intercultural Communication (BASIC) and Fantini has described others (Fantini, 2009). These instruments are usually measure competence using Likert-type scales, using more traditional paper-and-pencil tests. These alone are limited in their ability to account for the complexities of intercultural competence, and the nuancing that can be understood through less quantitatively measured means. They also need to be administered over time, rather than as a 'snapshot' test or survey; even so, they are not designed to capture what Liddicoat and Scarino have called the "ongoing dynamic process of learning" (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013, p. 264).

Student journals are another popular tool within case study research because they also allow insight into learner development over time. They were not used for this study, because the participants were already under considerable pressure, with a number of regular writing tasks in their regular language classes. Using journaling as one of these writing tasks in the future (i.e. embedding it within the curriculum) could be a way of ensuring that the benefits of future RT use are attained.

Method

Data collection

The methodology underpinning the study was chosen to gain a better understanding of the varied subjective experiences of RT in relation to ILTL. It therefore used a range of methods over an extended period of time to gain insight into learner's experiences from

multiple perspectives. The study was conducted at a large language school, which is part of a university in Sydney. The centre conducts long and short-term courses for international students intending to study at the university or to improve their general English language skills. The centre attracts students from around the world, but the majority come from Mainland China. Recently a large number of students on government scholarships from Saudi Arabia have also contributed to the student population. Student numbers at the centre typically fluctuate throughout the year, but at the time of the study student numbers ranged from 450 in October to 750 in January. The course length ranges from 10 weeks to 36 weeks.

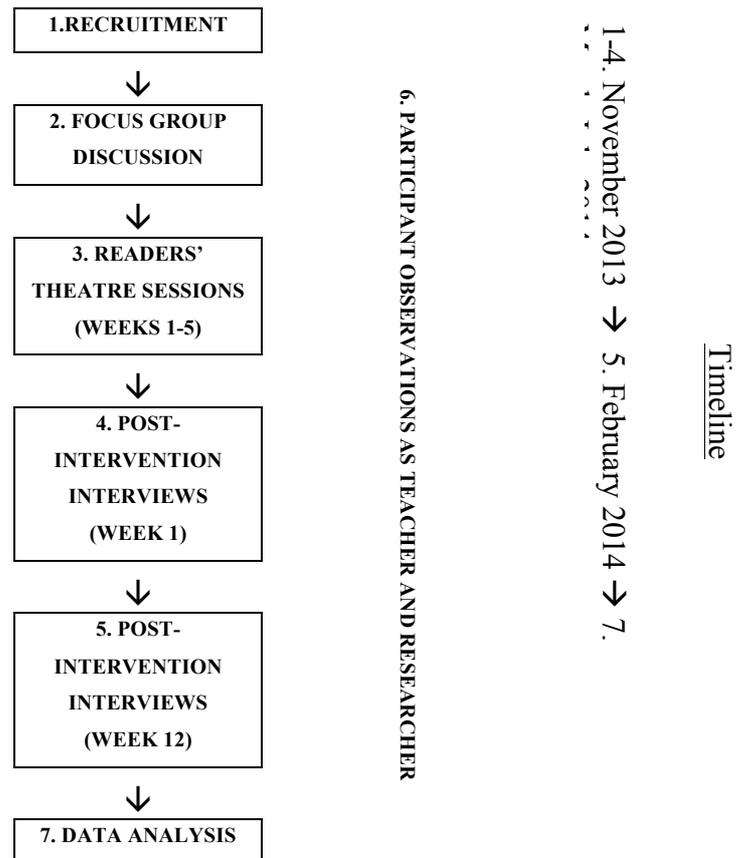
Lessons run in both the morning and afternoon with a lunch break in the middle of the day. Typically the morning sessions run from 8am to midday and the afternoon sessions run from midday to 4pm. The sessions all took place in the afternoon, after the participants had finished morning classes. They were conducted either in university tutorial rooms located within walking distance of the language centre or a classroom within the centre, depending on which rooms were available for booking. All of the rooms that were used had movable chairs and tables, which made it easy to reform the set up for whole class discussion, group work and performance. The focus group discussion took place immediately before the first RT session. There were five 90 minute RT sessions, which were held over a period of three weeks. Following the RT sessions some volunteers were selected to participate in the interviews. Data were collected in the form of audio recordings and video recordings of the RT sessions.

1. Recruitment

Approval for the research was obtained from the Human Research Ethics Committee at the University of New England and the language school where the study took place. The students in my university preparatory class were invited to volunteer for the study, which is a form of convenience sampling. Convenience sampling allows for variation providing insight into a variety of experiences of student learning (Punch, 2009). For the purpose of this study it was the most appropriate form of recruitment as it is ethically supportable and provides variation within the boundary of studying in the specific context of the language centre. Recruitment took place with a class of students who have IELTS scores of at least 5.5. At this level of proficiency they should all be able to understand and discuss concepts relevant to the study. At the beginning of class, I announced would describe the study during morning break. For the students who chose

to attend, the I delivered a short presentation about what the study entailed, taking them through the written Information Sheet. Thirteen out of seventeen students agreed to participate and gave informed consent in writing. This occurred while those who did not stay for the presentaion were on their morning break. Those who agreed to participate were also invited to provide a preferred email address as the main form of communication for the purpose of the RT intervention.

Figure 3.1. Data collection process



2. Focus group discussion

This chapter is the first of the findings chapters and analyses participants' intercultural understanding prior to experiencing any of the RT intervention. It establishes starting points of intercultural understanding prior to chapters 5 through 7, which follow the participants' developments in intercultural understanding over the course of the RT intervention (Chapter 5) and post intervention (Chapters 6 and 7).

The focus group discussion was conducted at the very outset of the intervention and was the first time for the teacher-researcher and participants to come together for the purpose of the study. At the time it was conducted, participants had only been introduced to the basic elements of RT at the information session and had not received any instruction about 'the intercultural' by the teacher-researcher. It was conducted immediately before the first RT session and served a number of purposes.

Firstly, the focus group discussion was intended to obtain data for analysis. This was done through audio recordings and transcription of the whole discussion. These data were then analysed using the Principles for Intercultural Language Teaching and Learning (Scarino & Liddicoat, 2009), Bennett's DMIS (Bennett, 1993) and to look for evidence of Byram's *Savoirs* (Byram, 1997), based on the participants' descriptions of their previous learning experiences and the discussion itself.

Using the Principles of ILTL, I was interested to know if participants' descriptions of their previous language learning experiences provided evidence of intercultural teaching and learning involving: active construction, making connections, social interaction, reflection and responsibility. As principles based in constructivist theory valued by Western educational practice (Parmenter, 2003), they may not have been advocated in the contexts in which the participants had received their initial education. In terms of analysis using Bennett's DMIS, given the fact that these students from China, Taiwan and Saudi Arabia have chosen to come to Australia for tertiary study, it is unlikely that they would fall into Bennett's *Denial of Difference* (Stage 1). However, since they have been in Australia for less than a year, I anticipated that they would be towards the 'left hand end' of the scale and unlikely to be at the *Integration* stage (Stage 5). I was also interested as to whether in describing their experiences of language learning, participants would provide evidence of the attitudes, knowledge and

skills required for Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) as outlined in Byram's *Savoirs*.

Secondly, the focus group was guided by questions in relation to previous language learning experiences. It therefore allowed participants to openly share from their successes and struggles in learning English. This allowed the teacher-researcher to gain insight into the participants' backgrounds and the various values, attitudes and experiences that existed amongst the group, which is noted as an important antecedent for Intercultural language teaching and learning (Robertson, Line, Jones, & Thomas, 2000; Sercu, 2004). It also provided opportunity for a 'needs analysis' as a critical starting point for all teaching and learning (Kumaravadivelu, 2012). The session also opened up valuable discussion whereby participants could relate to one another and familiarise themselves with the group from the very outset of the RT intervention process.

Lastly, the focus group served as an intercultural teaching and learning opportunity by opening an interactive dialogue that encouraged reflection on the way in which participants' own previous learning experiences and cultural backgrounds have shaped their approaches to language learning. In answering the questions outlined in the section below, participants shared some of their own insights and experiences with each other as well as me. This presented the opportunity to learn from one another through discussion as participants started to explore the connections between language and its relationship with culture.

Twelve participants were present at the focus group discussion. Questions were not provided in advance, which meant participants did not prepare answers but were engaged in spontaneous discussion about their learning experiences. Running the discussion in this way could have limited the depth and quality of answers, but it also meant that ideas were shared in a more natural, interactive and conversational manner where they were not under pressure to provide answers that showed their language skills or preparation, but could freely listen to one another focussing on understanding one another's experiences.

- *Can you describe your best experiences in learning English?*
- *Can you describe your most challenging experiences in learning English?*
- *Has the way you think and use language changed at all since coming to Australia?*

- *Have you ever used non-verbal communication to communicate with another person?*
- *Have you noticed any differences in the use of non-verbal communication between people in your home country and Australia?*

The focus group discussion took place within one week after the recruitment processes. It was held in a university tutorial room that had been booked through the university room booking system. The purpose of the focus group was to gain an understanding of participants' previous language learning experiences as a starting point for the study. The focus group was video recorded and a transcript made for data analysis.

After the students finished their morning classes, there was an hour break for lunch during which I moved to the tutorial room to set up seating and recording equipment. Twelve of the research participants were present for the focus group discussion. The focus group ran for an hour with questions that the participants had not seen previously. I functioned as the sole facilitator, using the following questions as a stimulus and guide for discussion.

3. Readers' Theatre Sessions (weeks 1-5)

The first RT session was conducted straight after the focus group discussion. +

Participants had not received any materials or instruction about RT prior to the intervention. Three of the four texts were selected, taking into careful consideration the students' English language levels (McKay, 1986; Vincent and Carter 1986), the texts' relevance and potential for emotional engagement (Brumfit, 1985; McRae, 1991; Tomlinson 1986), variation (Carter, 1988; Collie and Slater 1987) and scope for cultural exploration (Kramsch 1993).

By selecting texts rather than having them developed or chosen by the participants some of the collaborative and or ownership benefits associated with student selection or development of texts may have been lost. The RT sessions were an important stage to collect data as it captured the real time social interaction and use of language as a performer, which is fundamental to intercultural language teaching and learning (Scarino, 2007). Five 90-minute RT sessions were arranged to take place over three weeks, the first immediately after the focus group session. There were 11-12 participants present at each session; some participants had other commitments to attend to and there was no requirement for the students to attend all sessions.

The sessions were held in university tutorial rooms with capacity for 20 people. Each room was equipped with whiteboard, computer, projector and movable chairs and tables. Every participant received an individual copy of the RT script used session by session. I had hoped that RT would enable learners to engage in the embodied experience of language production in performance and that this would help them reflect on ways in which their own use of language is influenced by culture and the ways in which language use influences the possibilities for cultural understanding. I had also expected that by engaging with RT texts and by acting in the roles of different characters, they would be encouraged to consider other worldviews and come to an understanding of their own personal cultural and (metaphorical) location, linguistically speaking.

The four different stories that were used for each RT session are outlined in the table below. Texts were selected by taking into account participants' language levels, the language and cultural content of the texts, and whether I thought these students would find the content interesting. Therefore, the texts either have a particular and provocative moral content, to encourage discussion, or they make use of literary and dramatic devices such as suspense or irony to engage the reader. I had hoped these features of the RT texts would assist in providing opportunities to engage in intercultural language teaching and learning, for me and the students. Ultimately, I had hoped that participants would reflect on both the content of texts and the performative elements of RT, and that discussion around the role of culture and language in their own lives would emerge as a result of the RT process.

Figure 3.2 The Readers' Theatre stories

	RT script based on short story	Author
Session 1	<i>The Bad Little Kangaroo</i> in <i>Fables</i> Arthur Collins, 1983	Arnold Lobel (1933-87) Writer and illustrator, especially of children's books.
Session 2 3	<i>The Gift of the Magi</i> Courier Dove Publications, 1992	O. Henry (1862-1910) Writer of short stories with unexpected endings.
Session 4	<i>Little Things</i> in <i>Beginners</i> , Vintage, 2010	Raymond Carver (1938-88) American poet and short story writer.
Session 5	<i>Antar and Abla</i> in <i>Folktales from Syria</i> . University of Texas, 2004	A folk tale, origin unknown.

Each of the sessions followed the same general procedure with some slight variation from session to session. They followed a morning of standard teaching. The general procedure was as follows:

- Pre-talk about ideas from the text/warm up/introduce the text
- Read script as a whole class
- Practice the script in small groups
- Perform for each other
- Discussion and review

As was the case with the focus group discussion, each RT session was recorded and transcribed. The transcriptions were analysed against the selected intercultural models.

4. & 5. Individual interviews

After the RT sessions had concluded, participants were asked if they would be willing to volunteer for follow-up interviews, having been previously told in the information session that this request would be made. Among the eight students who had attended all five sessions, all were willing to continue to interview. The selection of the three participants took into consideration participant availability, because each of the interviews was approximately 40 minutes long and was conducted outside class hours. This was an issue as many of the students have various pressures from study and other responsibilities such as family or part-time work. Their willingness and ability to articulate their own views and experiences was another consideration in selection of participants, but any of the volunteers would have been suitable. The interviews explored the students' personal experiences and meanings attributed to RT and their development of intercultural understanding by drawing their attention to aspects of the RT sessions that were particularly relevant to ILTL.

In a one-on-one situation the participants were able to tell their stories in their own words (Jody Miller & Glassner, 1997). The format also allowed the flexibility for more in-depth questioning behind answers.

Interviews were conducted at one-week post intervention and twelve weeks post intervention. The first round of interviews was conducted in order to gain deeper insight into the participants' perspectives, while it was still fresh on their minds, on how the teaching and learning strategies used in RT might have contributed to intercultural language learning.

While the RT sessions captured the participants in action, as performers and discussants, the interviews served as an important means of gaining insight into their interpretations and subjective experience as analysers. The first interviews were guided by the following questions, with elaboration and explanation as necessary to ensure students' understanding.

- *What were your overall impressions of RT?*
- *Have you experienced learning English in a similar way before?*
- *What have you learnt from RT?*
- *What have you noticed about your own culture(s) and other cultures while doing RT?*
- *Have you considered how you were perceived by others as you participated in RT?*

The second round of interviews was conducted twelve weeks after the RT intervention. This was done to gauge development in the participants over time and how they related their subsequent learning and experiences to the teaching and learning experiences as part of RT. I was hoping that they were starting to consider the role of culture more in their everyday interactions, to question some of their previous assumption and a shift away from common stereotype that may have been expected in the early phases of the study.

Participants were asked

- *What are some of the main things that you remember from RT?*
- *Do you think there were any benefits from participating? Any disadvantages?*
- *Do you have any examples of increased awareness of cultural differences? Can you explain how RT might have contributed to this?*
- *Can you describe if and how the way you think about learning has changed?*

Each of the interviews was audio recorded and transcribed for analysis.

6. Observations as teacher and researcher

The researcher kept notes on the experience of the RT experience and the interviews with participants. Notes were written after each of the RT sessions and after the interviews. The notes covered administrative matters such as scheduling and organising sessions, but they also served as a space for the researcher to reflect on interactions, engagement and intercultural development of both the participants and themselves in the process of RT. There were two elements in the note taking process: the element of

reflecting on good teaching practice and what might be done to improve the educational process, and the element of asking to what extent the research process was succeeding in eliciting the participants' thoughts and feelings. This process involved reflection on the situation in an ongoing and recursive way, and therefore shared some of the aims and processes of action research, while not implementing a full action research approach. A case study approach was more suited to this particular study, which arose out of a particular interest in the potential of RT for ILTL rather than from the identifying and solving a practical problem within an educational context.

7. Data analysis

The audio and video recordings that had been transcribed were examined for examples of social and cultural interactions and student reflections that exemplified three widely accepted models within the field of Intercultural Communication, Bennett's Developmental model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) (Bennett, 1993), Byram's *Savoirs* (Byram, 1997), and the Principles of Intercultural Language Learning (Liddicoat et al., 2003).

When analysing the data using the DMIS I was looking to identify statements that were characteristic of the developmental stages of intercultural sensitivity which were outlined in Figure 2.3, Chapter 2. It is organised into six stages of increasing sensitivity to difference ranging from three stages classified as ethnocentric, where an individual views their own culture as central to reality, through to ethnorelative stages as the individual comes to understand their own culture in the context of other culture. I was hoping to gain a sense of where the participants were placed in development of their own intercultural sensitivity by applying the data to this model.

The *Savoirs* (See Figure 2.4a in Chapter 2) focus on types of knowledge that and important factors in intercultural communication. When analysing the data I wanted to identify any of the knowledge, attitudes or skills that participants reported from their experiences or demonstrated through real-time interactions with each other. These included attitudes (*Savoir être*) towards different cultural meanings, beliefs and behaviours, knowledge (*Savoirs*) about one's own and the other's cultures and skills and the ability to use cultural knowledge and attitude to interpret (*Savoir comprendre*) and to interact (*Savoir apprendre/faire*) and communicate appropriately (*Savoir s'engager*) in intercultural contexts.

The Principles (see Figure 2.5 in Chapter 2) focus on approaches to Intercultural Language Teaching and Learning. Rather than being stages of intercultural development or forms of intercultural knowledge, the Principles are viewed as preconditions for intercultural language teaching and learning and are not fundamentally intercultural themselves. By applying the principles to the data I was interested in gaining insights into participants' previous exposure to intercultural language learning, the way in which RT facilitated ILTL, and ways in which participants used the principles independently as a way of developing intercultural understanding.

To understand the ways in which the teaching and learning affordances of RT may have contributed to intercultural language teaching and learning, each of the transcribed data sets: pre-intervention focus group, RT sessions 1-5, three post-intervention interviews at 1 week, three post-intervention interviews at 12 weeks, were read repeatedly by the researcher to identify participants' statements that appeared to meet the attributes described in the models above. Such statements included discussions in which participants recognised the connection between language and culture or identified their own language(s) and culture(s) in reference to similarities and differences they had noticed about other languages and cultures etc. These data were then analysed by being placed within the categories defined in each model: the six stages of Bennett's DMIS, Byram's five *savoirs* and Liddicoat et al's five principles for ILTL (see Appendix). Following the individual analysis of each transcribed data set using the three models, the analyses were put side by side in chronological order, see. Figure 3.3.

Figure 3.3 Results Matrix

Approaches			Focus Group	RT sessions	Interviews week 1			Interviews week 12		
					Lulu	Falih	Khalil	Lulu	Falih	Khalil
Bennett's DMIS	1	Denial	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	×
	2	Defence	✓	✓	×	✓	×	×	×	×
	3	Minimisation	✓	✓	×	×	✓	×	×	✓
	4	Acceptance	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	5	Adaptation	✓	×	✓	✓	×	✓	✓	✓
	6	Integration	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	×
Byram's Savoirs	1	Savoir être	✓	✓	✓	✓	×	✓	✓	✓
	2	Savoir	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	3	Savoir comprendre	×	✓	×	×	×	×	✓	×
	4	Savoir apprendre	✓	✓	×	✓	×	✓	✓	✓
	5	Savoir s'engager	×	✓	×	×	×	✓	✓	✓
The Principles of ILTL	1	Active construction	✓	✓	✓	×	×	×	×	✓
	2	Making connections	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	3	Social Interaction	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	4	Reflection	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	5	Responsibility	×	×	✓	×	✓	✓	✓	✓

Collating the data in this way helped to both identify any significant developments and changes from the first point of collection at the pre-intervention focus group through to the final the post-intervention interviews at 12 weeks post intervention. This also provided further insight into the way in which each framework interacted differently with the sets of data.

The next stage of analysis included re-examining statements from each of the sets of data going over aspects of the three models that merge with each other. Detailed descriptions of the research processes and results outlined of these analyses are included in Chapters 4 to 7. Analysing the data in this way allowed for a greater understanding of the theoretical approaches that underpin and are common to each of

the models and the differences and affordances of each model. It also helped reveal the extent to which these frameworks helped to support and explain the use of RT for both teachers' and students' intercultural development.

For the post intervention interview analysis, each interview transcript was read repeatedly, comparing the three students' answers to the same questions, identifying any distinctive points of view and opinions. The set of interviews was then considered against the research questions, in order to identify the salient features of the RT intervention that contributed to intercultural understanding. This was a key process in answering the research questions, as participants provided detailed and personal recounts by making reference to elements of the RT experience that were particularly memorable or meaningful. Elements of the post-intervention interviews could also be related back to focus group discussion allowing further insight into developments in intercultural understanding. These descriptive data were essential for my interpretation of both the interactions that took place during the RT sessions and my own research notes with reflections and observations. Content analysis of my notes was undertaken by reading through the notes and listing the types of observations that had been made, and then trying to categorise them in order to identify potentially useful strategies for teaching and learning and potentially useful directions for further research.

CHAPTER 4

THE STARTING POINT

Focus group discussion

Participants were initially hesitant to share their experiences with the group. This seemed to be because they were only beginning to familiarise themselves with each other in this new teaching and learning context. When I asked the first question, I noticed a few of the participants' eyes dart around the table looking to see who would answer the question. Khalil, one of the more confident students, shared his experiences and others joined in the conversation as they had realised they shared common views or were able to offer a different perspective. At times participants would stop and think, or struggle with articulating ideas using gestures to support their ideas or for emphasis. By the end of the discussion, participants seemed more comfortable with sharing their experiences as they identified a range of similarities and differences in the way they relate to language and learning languages.

In order to analyse the transcript of the focus group, the three Intercultural models were used in two ways. They were used to identify evidence of intercultural development, based on past learning, and current expression, both in formal learning settings and outside the classroom. They were also used to identify some aspects of the focus group session itself that guided the participants to reflect on their own culture and make linguistic and cultural comparisons. The session also provided opportunities to demonstrate elements of intercultural sensitivity and/or knowledge, skills and attitudes for ICC.

The session ran for thirty minutes prior to the first RT session. The analysis highlights contributions to the discussion that were most relevant to the current study and analysis.

When asked to describe their best experiences in learning English, examples offered were characterised by authentic use of language, that is, language use that is intended for native speakers rather than specifically for language learners. This was in the form of mass media entertainment, such as watching movies or talk shows, language used for meaning-making in lived experiences and a desire to practise and use the language

learnt. Interestingly, none of the responses made reference to positive experience of learning in the classroom context.

Khalil was the first participant to share his experiences

Ah, my best experience of learning English is by entertainment. Watching movies, listening to the music. I think this is the most effective way of learning English for me. And it gives me encouragement to start learning English and encouragement to love this language... Even in my free time I like to read dictionary. Or [if I] heard movies when they talk, I like to translate it.

Khalil identified entertainment as an enjoyable form of language learning. When questioned further about what made it enjoyable, he did not identify one particular aspect of entertainment and responded saying, “entertainment for movies is enjoyable for everyone”. While we cannot rule out the possibility that Khalil may have also subconsciously enjoyed watching movies for the multimodal support provided by images, action, sound etc. and the cultural insight they provide, his response does not indicate viewing movies as a cultural resource. Rather, he seems to recognise the value of movies for their linguistic input, which encourages him to use the dictionary, and translate words he hears in context.

Lulu enjoyed learning through watching entertainment in the form of talk shows. In particular she mentioned that she enjoyed watching the Oprah Winfrey show as a child.

I prefer to watch the talk show. Yeah, and in my childhood, I watched the talk show with name Oprah - Oprah talk show ... I learn a lot of English in that. And I practise the spoken English - and some slang.

How did you practise the spoken English? (*Researcher*)

Repeat and repeat and listen and model - is the native speaker; what they are saying, and the stress and intonation. (*Amir*)

Lulu’s comments also implied that she was more aware of the potential for practicing stress and intonation and learning new vocabulary than connecting these elements with what can be learnt about culture. She also indicated that she viewed the native speaker’s English as the “norm” to aspire to, which is not the intercultural focus.

In relation to the Principles of intercultural language teaching and learning, both Khalil and Lulu’s comments provided evidence of *active construction* (Principle 1) through

meaningful and personal engagement with authentic resources. However, the focus of their learning was clearly directed towards the linguistic elements of vocabulary acquisition and pronunciation. Neither participant indicated that they were aware of the potential or the need to learn about culture or the enacted, interactive language used in entertainment. Therefore, it is difficult to locate their level of intercultural sensitivity on Bennett's DMIS which needs some form of cultural reference to identify a stage of development. They also showed an interest in learning and had sourced authentic and culturally rich multimodal/multi-semiotic forms of linguistic input, however gave no explicit indication of any cultural knowledge, attitudes or skills, identified in Byram's *Savoirs*, or of the additional semiotic systems or affordances of visual and enacted language for interpreting culture, through engaging with mass media entertainment. In the excerpt below, however, Mika'il described his positive experience learning English. He explained how he overcomes the difficulty of not being able to fully comprehend the verbal message by drawing on his knowledge of body language, where gestures and movement added further semiotic systems for understanding the text.

I think that body language the - by move, talk, I can understand the main point. I can't listen it, really. But I understand the main point they have to say. I can understand the main point. Little bit the words, I understand the main point.
(Mika'il)

He was glad to be able to interpret the 'main point' and to engage in meaningful communication. This showed Mika'il noticing some of the enacted and interactive culture as an important resource for meaning making in English. This is significant as it points to the importance of non-verbal messages for communication, which RT can help support and develop in students. For Mika'il, interaction assisted by non-verbal communication was a positive and encouraging learning experience, partly because it involves the purposeful use of English through *active construction* (Principle 1) and *social interaction* (Principle 3). This comes close to showing skills of discovery and interaction (*savoir apprendre/faire*) described in Byram's model because he was using his existing knowledge, attitudes, and skills to facilitate understanding and maintain real-time communication, although this was not necessarily based on specific cultural understandings. Mika'il definitely shows a willingness to communicate, but does not give any clear indication of cultural sensitivity or his attitudes to difference to be positioned using Bennett's DMIS.

Each of the examples of positive learning experiences provided by Khalil, Lulu and Mika'il was taken from learning experiences from outside of the classroom. Khalil and Lulu seemed to appreciate movies and talk shows as sources of authentic linguistic input. Mika'il enjoyed the sense of successful communication through drawing on non-verbal resources, as indeed the others may have done, but without conscious awareness. Each of these examples provides contextual information to assist with understanding, and involves communication that is both verbal and non-verbal. These elements are also provided by RT, which involves both the contextualised use of language which incorporates the use of body language, as the text is enacted.

The discussion moved onto challenges in learning English, which the participants described avidly. A clear focus on vocabulary arose in the conversation and it was obvious that students were thinking a great deal about lexical, semantic and orthographic strategies for learning vocabulary and understanding meaning.

Judy and Mei Ling described the lexical challenges they experienced trying to learn new words saying:

Vocabulary [is most challenging for me] (*Judy*)

If you have the a lot of vocabulary, I think you it is easier... but we don't know how to remember or how to use the vocabulary. (*Mei Ling*)

Others described the challenge of learning and using vocabulary that has a range of meanings that can be associated with one word. They demonstrated they had semantic knowledge, not just in spoken language, but also in written text saying:

When I write any English word to Arabic I find more than ten meanings for this word. I use English-English dictionary as well. Any new vocab, I found it with 2,3,4,5 synonyms in English. But in Arabic, more than 10 synonyms. (*Amir*)

For example, 'bring' - 'bring up', 'bring in' - different meanings... So when you translate in English to Arabic word - Could be this, could be this, could be this.

(*Participant raises right hand in exasperation*) Like this! (*Amir*)

Falih shared the challenges he has experienced trying to learn new vocabulary, as a result of the different spelling systems used by Arabic and English.

For me, it's the [problem of] spelling. Because ... when we want to listen [to something] if you don't know how to spell it (a new word), you don't learn any vocabulary. (*Falih*)

Amir was able to support and elaborate on this point, explaining that in Arabic graphemes correspond consistently with the sounds made in spoken language. This is true for Modern Standard Arabic, which is the standardised literary form of Arabic used for writing and formal speech across the Middle East, North Africa and the Horn of Africa. The regional varieties of Arabic differ and are typically spoken, not written. English, on the other hand, uses highly irregular forms of spelling to represent spoken sound.

... what we pronounce it, we write it. For example, in English ... say a simple word, like the word 'right'. Why [do] I write 'g', 'h'?! (*Participant raises his right hand in exasperation*). And same [as] this example, you find thousands of English words. This ... is a problem for us. (*Amir*)

Writing has been found to develop interdependently between first and second languages, even those that use different scripts (de Courcy & Smilevska, 2012). However, Falih and Amir indicated that spelling and dictation are more challenging for Arabic speakers who need to develop new strategies to effectively communicate through written text, or as Falih points out, to learn new vocabulary by writing down words.

The focus on vocabulary in this conversation portrays a view of language as code rather than as social practice and integral to culture. RT is noted in the literature as assisting with vocabulary acquisition (Chen, 2009; Keehn, Harmon, & Shoho, 2008; Kinniburgh & Shaw, 2007), however the focus of this study was to investigate if it could go beyond learning how to extend vocabulary repertoires, to raise students' awareness of the need to use language in culturally appropriate ways alongside developing linguistic skills. This conversation does, however, highlight differences between languages and hence language use within cultures. While participants were *making connections* (Principle 2) these linguistic connections are not viewed through the lens of culture at this stage. By using Bennett's DMIS or Byram's *savoirs*, it may be assumed that participants were concerned more with developing linguistic knowledge than Intercultural Sensitivity or Intercultural Communicative Competence, although the language awareness may indeed provide initial steps towards developing such understanding.

The discussion then transitioned towards participants sharing and reflecting on their own experiences and observations of using language in different social and cultural contexts and it became apparent that the *connections* (Principle 2) that were drawn

extended to variations in patterns of communication between languages, which touches on some of the sociocultural concepts that underpin intercultural language teaching and learning.

In the following excerpt, Khalil demonstrated he was connecting the varying assumptions about responsibility for effective communication in English and Arabic. He compared the two languages in a way that corresponded with Hinds' (1987a, p.143) notion of reader/writer responsibility. He proposed that English is a 'writer-responsible' language, because the effective communication of meaning rests primarily with the producer of spoken or written language. On the other hand, a 'reader-responsible' cultural view, such as Arabic or Chinese, relies on the listener or reader to piece together the main idea that is being communicated. This idea was supported by other students who agreed with the description of English made by Khalil.

Here (in Australia) the meaning is depend on the speaker. He must give the whole meaning of what he want to say. In Arabic, no need to give the whole meaning. You have to know what he wants to say. (*Khalil*)

That's it. You have to describe clear and direct what you want in English. (*Mika'il*)

[In Arabic, if] you talk, I can feel I know what you mean ... No need to explain. (*Amir*)

I think it (Chinese) is similar with Arabic. (*Muhui*)

The ability for participants to make connections between the similarities and differences in patterns of communication in Chinese, Arabic and English indicates they have some form of knowledge (*savoirs*) about the processes of social interaction in terms of patterns of communication within English speaking societies. This is also an important step towards thinking objectively about one's own culture and developing an intercultural stance. However, at this stage connections are being framed as differences in language, without making clearly defined connections to the cultural underpinnings that influence variation in language use according to the nature of interaction and the interlocutors. Using Bennett's DMIS, participants would be placed at the early stage of *acceptance of difference* (Stage 4) as they are starting to recognise and acknowledge these differences in patterns of communication.

Amir shared a different example from his own experiences of changing his language use as a result of *social interaction* (Principle 3). He explained that despite years of studying English in Saudi Arabia he continued to use Arabic sentence structures when using English. This demonstrates the notion of ‘interlanguage’ whereby learners rely on the structures of their first language when beginning to use an additional one, gradually shifting towards the norms of the new language (Selinker, 1972). Within an intercultural view, and especially a view of language use as being individual and unique, depending on the life and learning trajectory of the individual, there is less emphasis on adjusting on ‘correct’ structures with more of a focus on clear communication of meaning and a shift away from the desired proficiency outcome of a ‘native speaker’ (House, 2007). It was not until he started to engage with people in Australian society that he was made more aware of the grammatical differences.

For me, I started to study English when I was in Elementary more than five years or something. But I was always make mistakes. For example, ‘a red car’ for my language we say ‘car red’. When I started my study here in Australia, I heard people ‘a red car’ adjective before, so I think I say this like them ... When I left the country to where the language is spoken I found myself able to talk like English people. Of course, I am not like you (the teacher). But anyway, my language is improving. (*Amir*)

Amir had surely been taught noun adjective order before, however, it was not until he had to use it with people that this idea took root. While he acknowledges that “I am not like you (i.e. in language proficiency) he demonstrates he is *making connections* (Principle 2) through *social interaction* (Principle 3), however, these were only at the linguistic level. His readiness to take chances in his language use does not indicate he extended this to a willingness to revise cultural values, beliefs and behaviours which would be characteristic of an attitude (*savour être*) of curiosity and openness with a readiness to suspend belief about other cultures and belief about one’s own. Similarly, while these statements indicate a readiness to adapt linguistically, this does not extend to *adaptation to difference* (Stage 4) in culture as indicated in Bennett’s DMIS, which refers to acceptance of cultural differences in behaviours or values.

Falih then shared with the group an experience he had using non-verbal communication in a supermarket during his first month in Australia. At that time he had limited verbal language, he relied heavily on non-verbal communication for basic day-to-day

activities such as buying things from shops. When retelling the event he drew a vivid picture of the experience:

The first month (*puts out right hand with an open palm*) when I to buy something I can't understand (*holds both hands out with open palms*) what they want to say. I just look for body language and I can image (*moves right hand in circular motion*) what they want to say. And (*moves his right arm forward and points*) 'okay, I'll take it'.

Because (*tilts head to the side*) it's difficult for the first month actually, it's difficult to understand whole picture what he say. And just I look for the picture and what he say and after (*claps, moves his right arm forward and points*) 'okaaay, I'll take it'. (*Falih*)

Falih deconstructed what was happening both in terms of verbal and non-verbal language. His experience communicating in the supermarket was not unlike Mika'il's description of watching body language to get the 'main idea' when communicating. It involved *active construction* (Principle 1) by using non-verbal communication to create meaning and gain an understanding of everything that was happening. As he encountered new forms of language he related it back to what he already knew, *making connections* (Principle 2). He engaged in *social interaction* (Principle 3) in the form of real-time communication, which is also edging into skills of discovery and interaction (*savoir apprendre*), described by Byram, as he demonstrated the ability to operate his existing knowledge, attitudes and skills under real-time communication constraints and ultimately succeed in making a purchase. This example cannot clearly be placed at any of the defined stages of Bennett's DMIS, as it does not indicate attitudes to cultural difference or intercultural sensitivity.

However, as I asked follow up questions with regard to cultural influences on non-verbal communication, Falih and Mei Ling both expressed viewing body language used in different cultures is 'the same' or 'almost the same' which would indicate they are at the stage of *minimisation of difference* (Stage 3) of Bennett's DMIS.

So do you think body language used in English is the same or different from body language in your culture? (*Researcher*)

It's the same, the same, yes. (*Falih*)

This is different (*Motions eating with a spoon*) - or if I use chopsticks, (*Motions using chopsticks*) it's a bit different (*Researcher*)

But I think it's the same. (*Falih*)

Almost the same. (*Mei Ling*)

Falih and Mei Ling were minimising the cultural difference in non-verbal communication indicating that it is basically the same across cultures. *Minimisation of difference* (Stage 3) is the last stage of ethnocentrism, moving toward ethnorelativism. While this view demonstrates a lack of understanding of cultural difference, one of the positive aspects of this stage is that it makes interaction seem straightforward and achievable. While it promotes interaction and discovery (*savoir apprendre/faire*), at the minimisation stage, others' cultural viewpoints are not carefully considered but assumed to be the 'same'.

The conversations proved helpful in promoting reflection on linguistic and cultural concepts in a context in which the participants were free to engage with others, sharing and reflecting on cultural variations in gestures. Touching on what cultural anthropologist Edward T Hall (1969) refers to as the "hidden dimension" of intercultural experience, the conversation created an intercultural space for engagement without students abandoning their primary culture(s). RT provides opportunities to draw attention to these non-verbal elements of communication and facilitate conversation around this previously 'hidden dimension' of intercultural experience.

Conclusion

The purpose of the focus group was to learn more about participants' previous experience of learning English, their current dispositions and attitudes to language learning, and to identify a starting point for the imminent experience or Readers' Theatre. The discussion provided both participants and me with the opportunity to consider potential areas to be explored in sessions, and me with ideas to explore in individual interviews.

It was also an opportunity to open a dialogue around language and its relationship with culture, to pave the way for thinking about language learning in this way, and hence to open up possibilities for increasing intercultural awareness, sensitivity and understanding. It appeared that participants appreciated the chance to talk about their experiences learning English. The conversation led them to talk openly about their

challenges in engaging in new conceptual systems, working towards reciprocal relationships and directly exploring language to see their own and other languages in a comparative, reflective light.

By applying the three intercultural models to the responses within the focus group, each with its own framing of what intercultural language learning is and how it might be evaluated and prepared for with learners, it was evident that at this stage participants had a strong focus on the linguistic elements of language learning. The participants dedicated little attention to the importance of learning about culture as part of understanding linguistic systems. The links between culture and patterns of communication were tenuous in the descriptions provided. Participant responses also indicated that they had not yet received any culturally relevant, explicit instruction in non-verbal elements of language, nor been encouraged to utilise these additional semiotic systems to enhance meaning making.

What was perhaps the most interesting aspect of the discussion in the focus group was the fact that they did not connect any of their intercultural attitudes and experiences to formal instruction in the past, indicating a likely lack of intercultural 'education' as part of their language learning and a gap between their lived experiences of using language for interaction and what they considered to be 'learning experiences'. That is, it was apparent that their language learning experiences did not include a focus on or explicit mention of interculturality as a factor in, or orientation to language learning.

CHAPTER 5

THE READERS' THEATRE INTERVENTION

As noted in the previous chapter, students talking in the focus group did not appear to have reflected on the role of culture in their experiences of language learning. The focus group itself provided an opportunity to compare and contrast three different cultural contexts of language use, in Australia, China and Saudi Arabia. The students' engagement with Readers' Theatre, discussed in this chapter, provided an opportunity to see how the students engaged with languages and cultures through a different experience of language learning.

Overview of session structure

(In this section, some of the description of the research method merges with the results, due to the nature of the research.)

The structure of each session varied slightly depending on what seemed most appropriate for each individual session. Some sessions began with physical warm up activities, others with discussions based on themes in the stories. Discussions were not the same as 'pre-texts' which are typically used for non-scripted forms of process drama (O'Neill, 1995), but they still served to orient students to themes uncovered in the scripts. Participants engaged with the script by reading it aloud line-by-line, taking turns. Roles were not assigned at this stage. As the teacher, I also joined in the reading and answered questions as they arose, checked comprehension and practised pronunciation with the group. The participants were encouraged to make observations and interpretations of the text and to ask questions. In particular, they were encouraged to ask questions relevant to Australian society and customs.

Once the whole group had had the opportunity to ask questions about the meaning and the language presented in the script, they split into two groups of 6-7. In those two groups, they practised together in preparation for performing for the other half of the class. During this time they typically rehearsed the whole script together two or three times. They also used this time to experiment with and negotiate the most appropriate way to present the characters and events to the other half of the group. This took 20-30 minutes on average, depending on the difficulty and length of the script. This was an important stage of the RT process for *social interaction* (Principle 3) as participants

engaged in peer-to-peer learning helping each other to determine the best way to embody their roles in terms of verbal and non-verbal expression, body language, staging etc.

When both groups had had time to practise, ask any further questions and decide how to present the text as a performance, the groups performed for each other. This meant that the same story was performed twice i.e. once by each group.

Each session ended with a group discussion around some of the themes covered in the story, and reflection on use of non-verbal communication to supplement the text in telling the story. The length of discussion varied from session to session. Some of the discussion also happened outside of session times with participants who arrived early or stayed back to talk after class. Further discussion of this process is explored in the section on reflections.

As with the analysis of the focus group data, analysis of the RT sessions is considered in relation to Bennett's DMIS, Byram's *Savoirs* and the ILTL Principles.

First Readers' Theatre Session

The first RT session was based on the story *The Bad Little Kangaroo* written by Arnold Lobel. It is an allegory used to illustrate the idea that behaviour is often socially conditioned. The little kangaroo misbehaves at school. He throws spit balls, puts thumbtacks on chairs and lights firecrackers in the lavatory. This behaviour constantly sees him getting into trouble. When the school principal visits Mr and Mrs Kangaroo to talk with them about their son's bad behaviour, he discovers that the parents behave in exactly the same way the little kangaroo behaves at school. The moral of the story is that 'a child's conduct will reflect the ways of its parents'. This story provided a light-hearted introduction to the principles of RT, quintessentially Australian animals as characters and a simple moral tale. It created an opportunity to talk about stereotyping on the basis of ethnicity – are Australians typically badly behaved? This led to discussion of other 'typical' behaviours that they may have noticed while living in Australia.

Introduction

In preparation for the performative element of RT, the first session began with an introduction to non-verbal elements of communication including the use of voice, facial

expression, gestures etc. The participants were asked to reflect on how these elements can affect the meaning of the words. This was followed by a short pair role-play activity to practice this concept with a short dialogue of “A: Hi, how are you? B: Fine thank you. And you? A: Just great. ...”. The pairs were then assigned different characters and situations to act out the short dialogue while giving special attention to non-verbal communication to help others infer the contextual information.



Figure 5.1a. Practicing the dialogue in pairs

Pairs practised the dialogue in pairs first, shown in Figure 5.1a and then performed for each other and some volunteers performed for the group. This activity was done to help draw attention away from focusing on form and to pay attention to meaning communicated through non-verbal elements of communication.

Practice and performance

Participants read aloud through the script for *The Bad Little Kangaroo*, with each person taking a turn to read the line. As I answered questions and explained different elements of language presented in the text, such as the meaning and pronunciation of words like “thumbtack” and “medicine cabinet”, students would often take notes as shown in Figure 5.1b.



Figure 5.1.b. Khalil asks, “Is a medicine cabinet, like, a pharmacy?”

After going through the text together, the group was split in half and participants in each group were assigned roles among themselves and practised reading through the scripts in-character. I moved between groups offering assistance as needed. This is shown in Figure 5.1c.



Figure 5.1c. Groups practice reading the script in-character

After practising reading, participants enacted the script incorporating elements of non-verbal communication – voice tone, facial expression and gestures. For example, Judy, who was in-character as the school principal, made use of space and gestures to enact having her hand stick to the doorknob that was covered in “little globs of glue” (Figure 5.1d.) and then pull free from it (Figure 5.1e.).



Figure 5.1d. *Mrs Kangaroo:*
“Pull hard”



Figure 5.1e. *The principal pulled himself free*

The students were carefully watching each other as they performed. This is shown in Figure 5.1.d. & Figure 5.1.e. above, where the students who are sitting in chairs are watching Judy as she plays the part of the principal. This is also evident in Figure 5.1.f. below, where Zheng, who is sitting in the foreground and also had the role of the

principal, can be seen analysing how Judy performs his part.

As they worked in groups experimenting with different ways of presenting the text, the students also made suggestions and encouraged each other on their acting. An example of this is shown below in Figure 5.1.f., which shows Khalil giving Judy the ‘thumbs up’ for her acting.



Figure 5.1f. Zheng, sitting in the foreground, watches Judy acting his role, the Principal. Khalil gives her the ‘thumbs up’ for her creative enactment of the text

Once both groups indicated that they felt competent enough to perform the script, they performed the same story for each other.

Post-Performance Discussion

After the students practised and performed the story for each other, the group was seated in a circle and the discussion began with the question “Was what the kangaroo did indeed ‘bad’?” The participants were encouraged to share and discuss their own reflections and interpretations of the characters in the story, so that the Principles of *active construction* (Principle 1), *interaction* (Principle 3) and *reflection* (Principle 4) were all brought into play.

Falih and Mika’il expressed the opinion that the kangaroo had learnt these behaviours in his home environment and he would naturally continue to act the same way in other contexts as well.

You learn from the atmosphere or the environment around you, and you take that and your life. (*Falih*)

What you do in the home you will do when you go out. (*Mika’il*)

They acknowledged the importance of context in determining what types of behaviour is acceptable and appropriate. Mei Ling pointed out that at a young age he cannot be expected to know what is right and wrong in different social situations. However, Amir pointed out that doing something that could hurt someone, is unacceptable in any culture. He argued that teachers also have a role in helping the kangaroo understand what is acceptable in the school context.

He put like, thumbtack and something like this in any country it's bad. So in any country it's terrible, not just bad. For me, I didn't do that when I was a kid actually. (*Amir*)

But what she's saying is what you see in the home, this behaviour will reflect in the schools, because you see his father and mother do this thing and you think, it's okay, it's not bad. (*Falih*)

But sometimes, some person can learn from his teachers as well. (*Amir*)

We know that, but the main point is, it's what, when he play in home. And he take this play and it's joke - good to have laugh and fun - and it's good and he take it to the school. Because of that, we say it's not bad. (*Falih*)

While their interpretations of the little kangaroo's behaviour differed, each of them pointed towards the idea that appropriate behaviour is learned. Falih, Mika'il, Mei Ling and Amir all show evidence of perceiving the role of learning social processes as important for successful interaction and the formation of social identity as 'good', 'bad', 'a kid' etc. within a group.

When asked if any of the participants could give an example of other cultural rules, Mohammad *made connections* (Principle 2) using the example of waiting for the eldest person to start eating when eating in a family setting. Here, he related an intra-cultural difference as portrayed in *The Bad Little Kangaroo* to an intercultural difference in etiquette for eating, where respect can be demonstrated by the order in which different family members begin to eat.

Sometimes is from small things to big issues. Small things - it's like you want to eat with your family; we cannot start eating before the eldest one starts. (*Mohammad*)

Mohammad's insights into reasons for the little kangaroo's behaviour demonstrated he understood the influence of culture and the need to develop ways of modifying behaviour in certain social contexts. Learning and understanding social and cultural norms, such as waiting for the eldest person to start eating at meals, is a powerful way of positioning the elderly in a social hierarchy. Doing this together as a group mitigates misunderstanding and conflict about one's place in that hierarchy.

His comments also demonstrate awareness that socially appropriate behaviour is something that has to be learned and is acquired through observation and through engaging in social interaction in less familiar contexts. This is the process that Bennett describes in moving from ethnocentricity to ethnorelativism. Neither Byram's *Savoirs* nor Bennett's developmental model gives adequate recognition to the importance of this type of learning in the process of developing intercultural communicative competence and sensitivity. This discussion is close to, yet not fully illustrative of, what Byram describes as attitudes (*savoir être*) of curiosity and openness, readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and beliefs about one's own. Mohammad described specific features of his own culture but did not show curiosity and openness towards cultural difference. Similarly, Bennett's DMIS does not give recognition to the form of learning taking place in this instance. It would be going too far to evaluate the contents of this interaction as evidence of *acceptance* of difference (Stage 4), which assumes that difference is desirable and that no culture is better than another. This was especially clear in Mohammad's comments, which showed that, in terms of some cultural concepts such as hygiene, he displays evidence of *defense* against difference (Stage 2).

At this stage, I directed the topic towards Australian culture hoping to draw more participants into the conversation and to generate more examples of cultural similarities and differences drawing on participants' lived experiences.

“Have you found anything while living in Australia, which has made you think, “Why is it like this?” (Researcher – RT Session 1)

In answering this question, they articulated the challenges they experience in trying to connect their own intracultural perceptions to the new views with which they had come in contact in Australia. That is, they engaged in *active construction* (Principle 1), *making connections* (Principle 2), *social interaction*, (Principle 3), and *reflection* (Principle 4). Initially the connections between cultures focused on new phenomena

they had experienced in the context of Australian society, however, over the course of the RT intervention, the focus of discussion turned towards the participants learning about each other's cultures through discussion and asking each other questions.

Falih shared how he has been intrigued by the close relationship he had observed between a dog owner and his dog, sharing food from the same plate at a 'dog-friendly' café near the university.

I found something different from my country. When I walk on the street, I saw a man - he eat from the dish and his dog is eating with him... I saw this actually. The old man give his food to his plate and they get it from the same plate!
(Falih)

While most of the group were surprised to hear that the dog and its owner were eating from the same plate, Amir explained more clearly to the group what was happening in terms of the Saudi Arabian or Muslim cultural system. He identified the different connotations that are attached to the event from the various cultural perspectives of participants in the discussion. This is recognised by Byram's *Savoirs* as skills of interpreting and relating (*savoir comprendre*)

[In] my culture, [if] the dog eats from my plate I have to wash it seven times!
(Amir)

For Orthodox Shiite Muslims dogs are viewed as unclean or 'najis'. This view derives from the sayings of the prophet Muhammad that translate as "If a dog licks the vessel of any one of you, let him throw away whatever was in it and wash it seven times." (Fortuny, 2014; Hijazi, 2014). Given the brevity of Falih and Amir's comments, it is difficult to determine the attitudes they hold in relation to the cultural differences they have come in contact with. This is an important element of the DMIS, especially since they do not show clear evidence of the ethnocentric stages of *denial* (Stage 1), *defense* (Stage 2) or *minimisation* (Stage 3) of difference. While the DMIS is restrictive in this sense when trying to justly evaluate participants' intercultural sensitivity, the Principles give recognition to the importance of noticing differences by *making connections* (Principle 2), analysing them through *reflection* (Principle 4) and acknowledging that their existing language(s) and culture(s) influence their understanding of various phenomena.

The Confucian values of diligence and hard work, reinforced in the education system, have repeatedly been credited for the economic success of Asian countries (Fan & Kirby, 1995; Franke, Hofstede, & Bond, 1991; Hicks, 1989; Morris, 1996). This may explain how the concept of enjoyment of rest and relaxation observed in Australian society challenged the cultural framework of participants from Chinese cultures.

As the participants from Chinese cultures were more hesitant to provide their own examples of different behaviours they had observed, they were specifically invited to share their experiences of cultural difference in Australia. Lulu and Judy described people they have seen relaxing and enjoying themselves on the weekends in Australia, and how unfamiliar this concept is to them (*active construction, making connections, interaction*).

I think sometimes, in the weekends, I saw some Australian they just sitting on the grass and don't do anything.

Like in the park and have picnic or reading a book. They just - or listening to music - just do nothing. It's just a vacation. (*Judy*)

Why is this strange? (*Researcher*)

They don't do anything, just enjoy their life.

This is different [from Chinese culture]? (*Researcher*)

Yeah, yeah, really different.

In this instance Lulu and Judy did not demonstrate any of the skills for intercultural communicative competence. However, by describing their observations of behaviours they've noticed this serves as the first point for developing knowledge (*savoirs*) of the products and practices of Australian culture and the general processes of societal and individual interaction. Through observation they have encountered weekend rest as an established and accepted practice in Australian society. The cultural concept of rest is one that affects the lives of people on a daily basis, as well as affecting living conditions. By questioning why people relax on the weekend they are starting to develop a growing understanding of Australian culture and expanding their perception of leisure in Chinese and Australian society.

Like the Saudis' situation with trying to understand how to relate to dogs, the Chinese participants' response to observing relaxation demonstrates how learners make

connections between existing and new cultural frameworks. When this happens existing perceptions are challenged. It is this challenge which helps individuals reorganise and develop their intercultural understanding.

While both examples demonstrate awareness of making judgments based on their own cultural standards, they are not yet demonstrating *acceptance* (Stage 4) (Bennett, 1993) the first stage of an ethno-relative paradigm. Genuine *acceptance* of difference would be characterised by a sophisticated differentiation and elaboration of cultural categories, which is not yet evident.

The session ended with participants being asked to take note of any other cultural differences they notice in their day-to-day lives in Australia to share in discussion in the next RT session.

Summary

This session provided participants with their first experience of RT, enacting the script as opposed to reading a text and answering questions in relation to the grammar and content. The discussion leading on from the performances about contextually unacceptable behaviour depicted in *The Bad Little Kangaroo* was an opportunity for participants to reflect on the importance of being able to rethink initial conceptions, and to acquire multiple perspectives. It also allowed them to share some examples of cultural differences experienced in the participants' own lives, and how these are expressed through culturally-influenced language.

Second Readers' Theatre Session

The second RT session introduced the story *The Gift of the Magi* by O. Henry. It is a story of love and sacrifice with an ironic twist. A poor young couple living in New York in the early 1900s are trying to find the money to buy each other Christmas gifts. Della, the wife, decides to sell her long hair to buy Jim, her husband, a chain for his watch. While she does this, Jim sells his watch to buy Della tortoise shell combs for her beautiful long hair. The story ends in poignant laughter as Della and Jim realise the gifts they have bought for each other have no use.

The original schedule involved introduction of the text, reading, practising and performing the script. However, as the session was held on a Friday afternoon, the participants from Saudi Arabia had to leave early for the call to prayer. This provided

the group with another example of the importance of ritual in daily life and religious community in the formation of identity (Bonny Norton & Toohey, 2011). Such differences clearly have consequences for students living in a culture where Islam is not the dominant paradigm for the arrangement of schedules.

As the teacher-researcher I decided to focus on introducing the text and the ideas surrounding the text, delaying the actual performance until the next session so that everyone could participate. By moving the performances to session 3, I was able to allow more time for discussion around culture and it became apparent that the reflection and discussion stage in RT was of key importance. It developed a context in which participants could pose questions, offer responses and begin to move into developing intercultural awareness in a genuine community of inquiry. The text became the stimulus for these reflections, which is somewhat different from the use of RT as a reading strategy within the context of process drama.

Introduction

The introduction involved ‘building the field’ by drawing on the prior knowledge and understanding that exists among the group on the topic of gifts, with the intention of focusing on cultural aspects to build up to the theme of ‘gifts’ in *The Gift of the Magi*.

Gift giving is recognised as a central element of hospitality and is cited in the literature as a highly coded and symbolic form of social interaction (Wilczyńska, Liskova, Eðvarðsdóttir, & Speitz, 2004). Pragmatic differences and norms surrounding gifts are often the cause of misunderstanding, embarrassment and confusion, irrespective of linguistic competence and goodwill (DuFon, 2003; Eslami-Rasekh, 2005). This made the topic of ‘gifts’ appropriate for drawing attention to the fact that more is needed for successful language learning than linguistic competence alone; language learners also need to develop awareness of non-verbal and cultural competence. Developing awareness of one’s own cultural practices and expectations is the starting point for effective mediation and developing insight and influencing pragmatic choices (Grossi, 2009; Liddicoat, 2014).

Participants were invited to describe their own ideas and opinions about the circumstances under which gift giving is appropriate if visiting another person’s house.

As the conversation developed, it became clear that the kind and quality of relationships tend to dictate the level of formality expected and the type of gifts that are considered appropriate.

While the literature points out that it is important to identify cultural similarities rather than forming stereotypical ideas about difference (Byram & Feng, 2005; FitzGerald, 1999; Moran et al., 2014), failing to engaging in contrastive dialogue that involves potentially uncomfortable differences risks losing the opportunity to develop higher-level cultural understanding (Kohler, 2005; Paige et al., 1999). After I drew attention to cultural similarities for taking something to the host's house, Khalil pointed out that wine is not an appropriate gift in Saudi Arabian culture (*making connections* - Principle 3). This type of cultural contrast can lead to reframing and reorganisation of understanding around the meaning of alcohol. When Khalil pointed out that alcohol is not an appropriate gift in Saudi Arabia, he also considered how to respond in a way that acknowledges the other person's intention, and communicates his own cultural values in an appropriate manner (*reflection*).

In our culture, you have to bring something with you. Everyone bring something even if it's tea or cakes. Everyone bring something. (*Mohammad*)
I think this is similar in Australia... If you're going to a friend's house for dinner maybe you'll bring wine or dessert - sweets. (*Researcher*)
No alcohol.
What if your friend brings you a gift of wine? (*Researcher*)
We can't accept it. (*Khalil*)
[Would you say] 'Thank you, but no thank you'? (*Researcher*)
[I'd say] 'I would love to, but I can't.' (*Khalil*)

Khalil demonstrates *acceptance* (Stage 4) of the values associated with alcohol between the two cultures (Bennett, 1993) and he also shows skills of interpreting and relating (*savoir comprendre*) by considering how to mediate between conflicting interpretations of his rejection of alcohol given as a gift.

Judy entered the conversation by sharing with the group the Chinese concept of shoes as an inappropriate gift to give to a friend. This indicated she was *making connections* (Principle 3), with the ideas of culturally specific symbols and engaging in *active construction* (Principle 1) through drawing on her own lived experiences. It seemed

that Falih did not hear or understand her first explanation, and asked again the meaning behind giving shoes as a gift.

What about in China, is there any gift you shouldn't give? (*Researcher*)

Shoes. Because maybe I buy a gift [of] shoes for my friend's birthday present, maybe our friendship will walk. (*Judy*)



Figure 5.2a Judy explains the symbolic meaning of gifting a friend with shoes in Chinese culture

Why the reason for that, like it's unpolite? For the meaning? (*Falih*)

The meaning, because shoes are for walking - walk away. (*Judy*)

(*Falih claps*)

(Laughs)

[It's an] easy way! (*Falih*)

Falih's delighted reaction to her explanation indicated he enjoyed learning about the different cultural symbolic systems and messages that can be attached to gifts in Chinese culture. Bennett mentions that taking an interest and appreciation of cultural difference as displayed by Falih is characteristic of *acceptance* (Stage 4) (Bennett, 1993).

The discussion progressed towards symbolic features of the room for entertaining guests in Saudi Arabian culture. This conversation uncovered some of the cultural differences that exist amongst the various regions of Saudi Arabia. Khalil (from Jeddah) and Amir (from Riyadh) engaged in negotiation of the meaning of recorded time, acknowledging that they have different meanings in different regions of the country (*active construction, interaction*). This highlighted that it is not only 'others' who differ in cultural practice, but that variability in linguistic and cultural identities exists within any national identity. Connecting the intracultural with the intercultural is

recognised as an important process in *making connections* (Principle 3) (Papademetre, 2005).

Khalil introduced a traditional Saudi Arabian custom of giving friends your possessions if they compliment you on them. The participants explained how words can bear a different significance in different cultural contexts; they also acknowledged that as times change, various customs and their significance can also alter.

It's the same thing, but different meaning. You say 'I like your sunglasses'.



Figure 5.2b Khalil uses his sunglasses to explain the Saudi formalities for responding to compliments

In Australia it means 'I like [your sunglasses]' in Saudi Arabia it means 'I want [your sunglasses]'. (*Khalil*)

This generation, no. (*Amir*)

It's polite, just somebody say 'You have the glasses' or something like that.

'You can have it. Take it.' It's just polite, you have to say it. (*Mohammad*)

So Khalil may give his glasses to some classmate who says that? (*Calvin*)

Yes (*Khalil*)



Figure 5.2c. Amir invites his Chinese classmates to compliment Khalil's sunglasses

Excuse me. I have a question for my Chinese friends.

Can you say to Khalil 'I love your glasses'? I want to see what will happen. Ask him. I'm serious. I want to see you give your sunglasses for everyone. (*Amir*)

This *social interaction* (Principle 3) was enjoyable and allowed the students to present various understandings and expectations within different cultures. They explored variable perspectives, saw the subtle differences within different regions of the same cultural setting, and in doing so informed themselves and the rest of the group about the diversity within Saudi culture.

Because all of this discussion was relying on English as the medium of both instruction and discussion, the learners were developing oral skills in order to describe and mediate cultural understandings that are easier to express in one's first language.

Up until this stage of the discussion, the conversation was based around deconstruction of intracultural practices of gift giving and hospitality. Here, continuing on from the topic of appropriate behaviour between friends, Calvin asked about culturally appropriate ways of building relationships with people in Australian society.

I have a question about how to deal with the social relationship with foreigners and here in Australia. How to deal with it? For example we meet a friend and we make the relationship more close? (*Calvin*)

Perhaps you could find something you have in common. Maybe if someone has a scooter, you can say 'Oh nice, scooter.' (*Researcher, knowing that Calvin drives a scooter*)

Khalil used this opportunity to make a joke by referring to the conversation they had had about giving compliments in Saudi Arabian culture.

That means he wants your scooter. (*Khalil*)

Xiaodan continued the joke: applying this newly learnt concept from the previous topic he asked if this applies to all compliments, saying,

So, if you have a wife, I say your wife is beautiful ... (*Xiaodan*)



Figure 5.2d. “I say your wife is beautiful...”

The participants found Xiaodan’s joke amusing as she applied a concept she had learnt from her classmates about Saudi culture to a different context. The discussion provided a platform from which to explore one’s own culture and the culture of other group members. Carr (1999) refers to the classroom as a ‘site for creation of a culture’ when, as in this instance, genuine dialogue between cultures results in formation of a third kind of culture (Carr, 1999). Newly shared cultural information was transformed into shared insights between the participants.

Group reading of text and Close

The text was read as a whole group with opportunities for participants to ask questions about the meaning and specific language used in the text. To close, participants were encouraged to take time over the weekend to imagine the story and how the roles from the script might be enacted in a performance.

Summary

The second RT session proved to be an opportunity for participants to reflect in more detail and depth on practices from their own cultures. This was achieved through discussing various elements of culture including hospitality, gift giving, dining etiquette, social interactions, appearance and clothing. In contrast to the discussion in the first session, participants were starting to explore some of the semiotic systems, such as the symbolic nature of gifts or compliments, that exist and influence the ways

in which their own and other cultures function. They were starting to move beyond sharing simple descriptions of different behaviours as had occurred in the previous discussion. As they learned about some of the semiotic meanings in each other's cultures the classroom became site for the creation of its own, shared specific knowledge amongst the group "third kind of culture" or heteroglossia (Carr, 1999, p. 108) and Kramsch's idea of a 'third space' (Kramsch, 1995).

As participants shared more about their own cultures with the rest of the group it seemed that it contributed to developing a positive dynamic. Participants appeared to be more comfortable with sharing their experiences and opinions with each other as part of the RT procedure. Participants showed interest in how to form relationships in an Australian social context and also touched on the notion of culture as being dynamic and subject to change over time.

Third Readers' Theatre Session

The third RT session was a continuation of the story *The Gift of the Magi* from session 2. Session 2 had ended with the whole group reading of the script, without the performance. The actual performance of the script had been moved to Session 3 because the Saudi participants needed to leave early to attend the call to prayer.

Introduction

For the third RT session, participants who had arrived early were already engaged in a spontaneous, unprompted conversation about marriage. By session 3, the participants seemed to be intrigued by cultural differences they had uncovered over previous sessions and eager to learn more about one another's cultures. The topic of marriage relates both to *The Gift of the Magi* and to *Little Things*, which was introduced in session 4. *The Gift of the Magi* is built around a young couple's love for one another, while *Little Things* concerns an argument in which a couple's conflict threatens to harm their baby. As Kramsch (2002) points out, it can be difficult to determine exactly where learning takes place, but this conversation appeared to represent a "breakthrough" moment where the imaginative freedom offered by RT (with much good humour, self-deprecation and at times mild embarrassment within an accepting environment) acted as a catalyst for students to talk about topics that would probably have elicited much more stilted responses in a more traditional teaching situation.

Interaction allows individuals to negotiate meaning and to question their own construction of meaning (Principles of *active construction, interaction, making connections, reflection*) (Kramsch, 2002). Recognising the importance of this spontaneous conversation, I joined in the discussion as participants shared information and asked questions about marriage in each other's cultures.

As participants recounted their own experiences, they formed new understandings and insights about marriage. This involved *active construction* of knowledge (Principle 1) through question and answer and *making connections* (Principle 2) about cultural similarities and differences in *social interaction* (Principle 3).

The students from China were intrigued when they were told that Saudi Arabian men are required by law to give their wives pocket money. On the other hand, Saudi Arabian students were interested to find out that, in some areas of China, people do not have to receive parental permission to get married. Both groups showed attitudes (*être*) of curiosity and openness about customs that influence the day-to-day life in people of other cultures. There was also a clear development from *minimisation of difference* (Stage 3) to an *acceptance* (Stage 4) and appreciation of cultural differences and a willingness to examine and question assumptions.

Do you give money to your girlfriend? (*Xiaodan – RT Session 3*)

My wife? (*Khalil*)

No, girlfriend, (*Xiaodan – RT Session 3*)



Figure 5.3a Do you give money to your girlfriend?

Before marriage? (*Khalil*)

Before marriage. (*Xiaodan – RT Session 3*)

You have to go to her father and then ask her for marriage and then get married.

(Khalil)

Aaah. *(Xiaodan – RT Session 3)*

Khalil recognises that his Chinese classmates are struggling with the concept of a husband being obliged to give his wife pocket money and to ask her father for permission to get married. His response, explaining the process of courting before marriage in more detail, demonstrated an attitude (*être*) of readiness to suspend beliefs about his own culture and consider how these practices may be viewed as new or strange from a Chinese student's perspective.

(Laughing) They can't imagine this *(Khalil)*



Figure 5.3b. “They can't imagine this”

Yeah, can't imagine *(Xiaodan – RT Session 3)*

No, there is one year before marriage. There is one-year engagement. So this period you can get along with her, get to know her, adapt together, understand each other. This is long enough to get to know each other. After one year, she can say ‘I don't like you’. *(Khalil)*

Say ‘Bye’ *(Calvin – RT Session 3)*

Calvin connected the conversations with Australian culture by asking about the average age at which people get married in Australia. Students began to realise that the current social trend toward deferring marriage in Taiwan and China are similar to Australia. The students discussed the pros and cons of later parenthood, including the restrictions that motherhood imposes on women. The range of ideas in the conversations required the students to find English expressions to make their points, searching across their linguistic resources to find the ‘fit’ for the cultural meanings they wanted to convey. The RT scripts, although brief, conveyed highly significant ideas about love, giving,

conflict and destruction in relationships. The texts appeared to free up the students to explore important questions about relationships with one another.

But people say it's not good to give birth to a baby after thirty. *(Calvin)*

But near forty? Maybe it's dangerous. *(Calvin)*

You are forty and your baby - you grow up and you are sixty and they have a gap. *(Falih)*

But you can be married without having children. I think it doesn't affect your lifestyle, career, or something. *(Khalil)*

Larsen-Freeman (1997, 2007) would argue that the dynamic variation in viewpoints, in this and in the surrounding discussion, is a closer reflection of the complex nature of language use and acquisition experienced by the learner. The idea of a lifestyle in which a couple might marry but not have children led to the topic of living together without getting married. It highlighted some of the variations in expectations for marriage that exist across China. It also shed light on some of the changing attitudes towards cohabitation before marriage. The Chinese participants linked this concept of living together to the Chinese term 'chuhwan' or 'try marriage'. While it appears that some people in China live together outside of marriage, Khalil pointed out that this practice is culturally unacceptable in Saudi Arabia, and there is no polite word to describe such a state.

In Australia, a lot of people live together before marriage. *(Researcher)*

Boyfriend and girlfriend live together. People live together before marriage. *(Khalil)*

In China it's called try marriage, as you say, just live together and 'chuhwan'. *(Calvin)*

Never in our religion we can do it. *(Khalil)*

Practice and Performance

After the discussion around marriage, the group returned to the script from *The Gift of the Magi*. The whole group read the script one more time and then the participants divided into two groups. As they practised in their groups, they worked through the script checking with each other that they understood the meaning. An image of one group working through the script is shown below in Figure 5.3.c.



Figure 5.3c Khalil, Mika'il, Calvin and Mei Ling work through the script together.

Each group assigned roles and practised reading through their parts. They also shared ideas about how to perform. This is shown in Figure 5.3.d. where Muhui and Mei Ling discuss how to perform their parts.



Figure 5.3d Muhui and Mei Ling discuss how to perform their parts.

As the participants put action into their different roles they watched each other and gave each other feedback. I also moved between groups, monitoring and giving suggestions as seemed appropriate. This is shown in Figures 5.3.e. and 5.3.f., which shows Xiaodan enacting Della as she takes off her hat (Figure 5.3.e.) and shows Jim her hair (Figure 5.3.f.).



Figure 5.3e “Take off your hat”



Figure 5.3f. “Show me your hair”

After practising the script in groups, both groups performed the script for the other, one after the other. It was common to see students observing the other group’s performance reading the script as it was being performed. In Figure 5.3.g. Mei Ling (far left), an observer, reads along and touches her hair as Zheng (far right) performs saying, *Della, your hair is already so long and beautiful.*



Figure 5.3g. *Della, your hair is already so long and beautiful*

After both groups performed, the session concluded with participants being asked to think of any famous stories from their own cultures that might be suitable to use in the fifth and final RT session.

Summary

By the third RT session, participants demonstrated that they felt comfortable asking each other about their personal lives and engaging in discussions that revealed

contrasting opinions and worldviews. While a worldview of acceptance may involve discomfort with some cultural differences, there was interest in learning more about other cultures, creating new insights by connecting existing conceptions with new understandings. Through explaining their own culture to one another, participants were able to develop a better understanding of how culture shapes worldviews, which in turn influence observable cultural practices. The RT stories were a touchstone for conversations that elicited ideas and increased mutual understanding of each other's perspectives. The formal context of the classroom became a site for reflection on some of the changing cultural, historic and political contexts in which they are living their lives and are reflected in their own words and actions.

Fourth Readers' Theatre Session

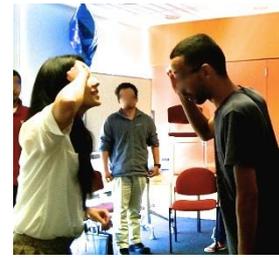
Introduction

Prior to the enactment of *Little Things*, the students participated in warm-up activities that included some improvisation of miming actions such as dancing or playing a sport. Some examples are shown in Figures 5.4.a., 5.4.b. and 5.4.c. shown below.



Figure 5.4a. playing tennis Figure 5.4b. hula dancing Figure 5.4c. running

Another warm up activity was a mirroring game in which pairs have to mirror one another in various actions and gestures for a set amount of time. The mirroring activity was first modelled by Falih and myself to demonstrate to the rest of the group how to do it. This is shown in figure 5.4.d. below. Participants then split into pairs and mirrored one another (an example is shown Figure 5.4.e) for 4-5 minutes in various actions and gestures to free them up for the performance of the story *Little Things* by Raymond Carver.



5.4d Researcher and Falih model the mirroring activity



5.4e Falih mirrors Lulu in the warm-up mirroring activity

Practice and Performance

In the same group setting, the students came together to engage with the script. To set the scene I introduce the text explaining that it comprises a short scene about a man who is leaving his wife and trying to take their baby with him. The final line is ambiguous and chilling. The man has used his strength to tear the crying baby from his mother's arms, but it is not clear exactly how "the issue was decided".



5.4f Introducing the script *Little Things*

Divorce? (*Falih*)

Maybe. We don't know. It starts on a rainy day. Everything is dark.

(*Researcher*)

So it's sad. (*Falih*)

There is some fighting, some shouting. (*Researcher*)

Argue. (*Khalil*)

So, I want you to think how you can show that. (*Researcher*)

The participants read through the script for *Little Things* with the opportunity to ask questions. With the reading and explanation of *Little Things* two volunteers were chosen to enact the script as it was read. Some of the technical elements of the characters' actions can be confusing, so enactment helps in this regard, but it also helps to ensure student engagement as they watch the way in which the other students are interpreting and attempting to convey meaning. After practising the participants start to express themselves more freely using a number of non-verbal communication strategies including gestures, voice, facial expression and body language.

In this session, students seemed to have developed a confidence both in collaborating with each other, by making suggestions and negotiating how to best present the story and in actual enactment of the text performance. This confidence may be attributed to a number of elements such as the positive rapport between students and that had developed over the previous sessions, their familiarity with the process of RT and the physical warm up activities that were done at the beginning of the session. This can be seen in Figure 5.4.g in which one group negotiates roles as they begin to engage with the script as a group.



Figure 5.4g Negotiation of roles

The performances of *Little Things* were also particularly impressive. Students effectively embodied the texts to present the script in a way that conveyed the tension between the fighting couple. In Figure 5.4.h. Mika'il, still crouching and in the middle of 'packing his suitcase', looks up at Xiaodan who displays anger and frustration through clenched fists, facial expression and a wavering voice as she says, *I'm glad you're leaving! I'm glad you're leaving!*



Figure 5.4h *I'm glad you're leaving! I'm glad you're leaving!*

One of the female participants, Judy, shown in Figure 5.4.h. in the picture on the far left convincingly used vocal tone, word stress, volume and gestures to convey her distress, which the others admired.

Figure 5.4.i also shows the physical struggle between the man and woman over 'the baby' to represent the ending of the story.

She grabbed for the baby's other arm. She caught the baby around the wrist and leaned back.

But he would not let go. He felt the baby slipping out of his hands and he pulled back very hard.

In this manner, the issue was decided.



Figure 5.4i *He would not let go*

This disturbing story had a clear effect on the group. The students had already given expression to ideas about the status and power of men and women in Chinese and Saudi society in their informal conversations during the RT sessions. This story provided an illustration of what appeared to be universal themes – the physical power of men to enforce their will, the helplessness of women when faced with superior force.

Post-performance discussion

Realising that our time together was limited, I was aware that it would not be possible to fully address issues around the power imbalance between men and women, because the issue of women's treatment across cultures is a sensitive one. While a more extended period of working together might have allowed us to address cultural beliefs more fully, I decided to draw attention to the impressive way in which Judy had embodied the text through the use of her voice to express emotion.

Judy made good use of her powerful voice (*Researcher*)

Yeah! (*gives a thumbs-up in agreement*) (*Xiaodan*)

The students agreed that these were important elements of communication, independent of the language component, and available for them to use to convey meaning.



Figure 5.4j Xiaodan gives a 'thumbs-up' to Judy's great use of voice

In this session, Chinese students, who tended to be more passive and reticent, appeared to find in the RT experience a pathway to freer expression, especially since their efforts, within a community of learners, are connected to helping other students to understand the text, rather than simply to display their own understanding. To the extent that they both entertain and inform their fellow students, they become more confident that the performance is not a test, but a work in progress, to which everyone is contributing.

Before closing the session, participants were asked to think of any legends or allegories from their own cultures in relation to stories from previous sessions, *The Bad Little Kangaroo* and *The Gift of the Magi*. As a result the conversation turned into a discussion about superstitions and religion, both of which play an important role in shaping values, culture and language (Ferraro & Andreatta, 2010; O'Dowd, 2003;

Samovar, Porter, & McDaniel, 2009). They are an important area of discussion for developing intercultural competence (Byram, Gribkova, & Starkey, 2002; UNESCO, 2013).

Participants drew an important link between language and culture as they struggled to communicate part of their culture with which they are very familiar, but which they knew might not make sense to an outsider. This required language they had not encountered in English language classes. For example, the participants from Chinese speaking cultures shared the story of a monster said to eat people, especially children. In the story, the people in the village find that the monster is scared of the colour red and the noise of firecrackers. This is how the tradition of wearing red and lighting firecrackers to celebrate Chinese New Year began, because both can scare off the monster. The lack of language for accurately explaining significant Chinese cultural symbols can be seen below.

[The monster is] scared of noise and red colour. So how do we describe that? I don't know. Get some red paper, and red - something - don't know how to describe it. (*Judy*)

Saudi students then drew on their existing knowledge to try to understand the story.

Is it the dragon from the dragon dance? It moves its head from side to side. (*Researcher*)

It's different. (*Judy*)

That dragon was cute [not like the monster]. He's dancing! (*Khalil*)

When the Saudi students were asked about mythical creatures in their culture, they seemed to agree that Arabic legends are typically based on real life stories for example, the parting of the Red Sea.

The data selected from the RT sessions provide evidence of some of the engagement and meaningful interaction in English that occurred throughout the intervention as a whole. The discussions occurred before, during and after the periods in which students practised and enacted the texts. I took care not to rush the process of reading the texts, because they provided a scaffold for students to recognise the existence of their own cultural frameworks and how they influence cultural practices, social expectations and outward expression of culture. By identifying their own cultural framework they were

also able to appreciate the dynamic nature of language and culture, as well as language specificity in different cultural contexts, and were challenged to consider their own responses to change and to differences in languages and cultures.

Summary

At this stage it appeared that a positive rapport had developed within the group, based on shared information about language and culture. The time dedicated to some drama warm up activities also seemed to help participants engage in the use of a fuller range of communication styles to perform the script, to support the performative element of RT. Students “loosened up”, relaxed and tried new ways of conveying the message of the script, based on the feeling that there were no right or wrong ways of going about it. Spontaneous discussion and defined preparatory activities both appeared to contribute to the sense of camaraderie within the group.

The discussion in the fourth session resulted in some of the Chinese participants struggling to explain in English some of the symbols central to Chinese culture drawing attention to the inextricable link between language and culture.

Fifth Readers Theatre Session

The story used in the fifth RT session is an Arabic legend *Antar and Abla* that was suggested by Amir after the students were asked to volunteer a story for the final session. In his own time, he searched online to find versions of the story in both Arabic and English and wrote his own summary using the information he had sourced online and his own ideas. A few days before the fifth session, Amir and I converted his summary into the RT script that was used for the performance. He appeared to be proud of the tradition of stories and poetry in Arabian culture and its fame as the home of the *One Thousand and One Nights*, a collection of folk tales compiled in Arabic during the Islamic Golden Age. He also explained the importance of oral recitation of stories and poetry in Arabic culture and that the older generations are able to recite long literary works from memory, which helped Amir to identify with the similarities with the oral presentation of text in RT.

In the story of *Antar and Abla*, Antar was the son of a well-respected tribe member and his mother was an Ethiopian slave. Despite being a slave in the tribe, Antar was able to

earn his freedom after fighting in a battle to defend the tribe from attack. He remains famous as both a hero and for his beautiful poetry in Arabic cultures.

Introduction

The fifth and last session began with a review of both the stories and the elements of non-verbal communication and performance that had been covered in the last four sessions. This was done by showing the group a number of images taken from the video recordings of previous sessions on the projector. I asked what changes they observed over the previous four sessions. They commented on each other's development in confidence, increased use of body language and effective use of voice for expression.

The lesson then progressed onto a warm-up activity called 'Mate!'. In preparation for the activity, the group was shown a short YouTube video demonstrating the way in which the term 'mate' can be used in Australian slang to mean a wide variety of different things. The activity itself involved student sitting in a circle with their heads down and eyes closed. When the teacher says 'look up, mate' the students sitting in the circle look up and open their eyes. If any students find themselves looking at each other, they have to call out 'mate!' and are together eliminated from the circle. This activity was used to help students 'loosen up' and reflect on how eye contact can serve as a powerful form of non-verbal communication. It was also an interesting way for students to consider ways in which one single word in the English lexicon can be used so variably and powerfully.

After the warm up activity, about ten minutes were spent building the field. This was done by making comparisons to elements in both Chinese and Australian contexts such as the desert in Arabia, China and Australia. I was also able to ask students about comparable social structures and elements of history (such as the use of camels in the past in Central Australia).

Practice and performance

The script was read through as a group with opportunities for questions and clarification. The story of *Antar and Abba* includes vocabulary such as 'tribe' and 'clan', which students knew the concept of in their first languages, but had never needed to use in English. These words were put up on the board as they were explained as shown in Figure 5.5.a. below. The script also included short segments of poetry

because Antar was known as a famous poet who wooed Abla with his poetry. These sections of the script, such as the example below, needed more attention in order to help students understand the use of metaphor.

The lovely virgin has struck my heart

With the arrow for her glance for which there is no cure.



Figure 5.5a The teacher-researcher writes new vocabulary from the script on the board. Again, participants split into two groups to practise the scripts and perform for each other. Amir, who had suggested the story and co-created the script for *Antar and Abla* helped the other students in his group with clarification while I spent more time with the other group, shown in Figure 5.5b. Being a story set in the 6th century Arabia seemed to have made the script more challenging for the group than the previous stories had been. This seemed even more so for the Chinese-speaking students who needed to imagine characters from an Arabic historical context.



Figure 5.5b. Reading through the script in groups

Despite the text being more challenging than previous texts that had been used in RT sessions, students enacted making use of elements such as stance, gesture, eye contact etc. In the Figure 5.5c shown below, Antar runs to his brother Shaibob to tell him about his love for Ablā.



Figure 5.5c *Your mother is a slave. You can't expect her (Alba) to love you.*

Discussion

Participants finished the RT sessions having considered the stories they had learnt and their increased awareness of the many components of IC, both verbal and non-verbal.

The nature and the social dynamic of the RT performances and discussions changed over the five sessions. Each session involved two main modes of learning. One was through practising and performing the RT scripts in a group context. The other context, in which much of the intercultural language learning took place, was in discussions, which were based on the performances or in related to themes such as gift giving that were presented in the texts.

Through working with the RT scripts in practice and performance the participants engaged in *active construction* (Principle 1). They were also required to actively engage with the language both mentally and physically as they practised and performed the scripts. The whole-group readings provided for *social interaction* (Principle 3) through asking questions in relation to the script; however, the process of working in a smaller group to practise and perform allowed for closer collaboration and negotiation, while working in reciprocal relationship with participants from other cultures, they shared ideas for representing the characters and events through enactment of the script. In performance, the imaginative element of RT also encouraged *reflection* (Principle 4)

in learners; they were required to both reflect on the content of the story they enacted and to consider how they are perceived in action (reflection/reflexivity).

The RT discussions show that both teachers and students bring their own interpretive frames to the language classroom. The themes presented in the RT text introduced topics that developed into ongoing dialogue in English based on the participants' own lives and experiences. Through this social interaction and communicating about language and culture it appears all members developed an awareness of their own cultural framework through noticing, comparing and *making cultural and linguistic connections* (Principle 2). This increased awareness of their intracultural selves and the processes underlying their own thinking. Over the length of five sessions, the participants developed an interest in learning more about other cultural practices and perspectives. Some of the cultural differences challenged participants to reframe their perspective and extend their understanding of issues as part of the process of discussion and developing skills for successful intercultural communication.

CHAPTER 6

INTERVIEW ANALYSIS AT WEEK 1

In the previous chapter analysing the five RT sessions, students were engaged in social interaction, enactment of RT scripts, and discussion and reflection on the performances and elements of culture that relates to the texts.

This chapter describes the first of two rounds of interviews. The interviews provide an important source of data and were aimed at gaining accounts of the participants' subjective experiences of RT and how this related to their intercultural understanding. The first interviews, which are addressed in this chapter, were conducted one-on-one within a week of the RT intervention, in order to understand participants' immediate personal responses while they had the RT sessions fresh in their minds.

Three participants were invited to continue with two individual follow up interviews that lasted for about 40minutes on both occasions. They were a volunteer sample, selected on the basis that they had attended the whole five sessions, had flexible schedules and were willing to articulate their ideas. A small number of participants were used to gain a richer, more in-depth understanding of cognitive, reflective and attitudinal changes that had potentially occurred through participation in RT.

I was particularly concerned with understanding how these three individuals experienced RT and its potential to open them up to new understandings of intercultural language learning. Some of the Principles, such as *active construction* of language and *social interaction*, are an inherent part of the process of RT. However, Principles such as *making connections*, *reflection* and *responsibility* emerged more clearly as they talked about their personal experiences.

Some of the teaching and learning processes used in RT that may have contributed to ILTL were the co-creation of vivid pictures of literary texts through the embodiment of the language, the chance to experiment with verbal and non-verbal communication in a safe environment and perhaps, most importantly, the class discussions, which were based around ideas presented and performed in the text. By spring-boarding off enactment and thinking about movement, use of voice, etc. afforded by RT, these deliberate and extended pre-, during and post discussions served as a way into deeper intercultural understanding. By orienting the discussions within an intercultural frame,

they also allowed everyone, including the teacher-researcher, to connect learning with their own lives and experiences from outside the classroom.

In the initial introduction to the study, I had expressed my interest in learning about how the participants experienced RT, and was returning to this focus in the interviews. The interview followed a number of semi-structured questions, which were points for beginning discussion and were facilitated by prompts as shown below. To avoid leading questions, I directed the questions towards their general experiences of RT, however, had hoped that the interviews would elicit specific examples of intercultural language learning, such as making connections, interaction, reflection etc, as well as more general comments about their experiences.

- *What were your overall impressions of Readers' Theatre? [Can you describe the most interesting thing you have learned? Can you describe any negative impressions?]*
- *Have you experienced learning English in similar ways before? [Can you describe that a little more?]*
- *What have you learnt from RT? [Were there any new ways of learning English that came out of RT?]*
- *What have you noticed about your own culture and other cultures while doing RT? [Any other examples?]*
- *Have you considered how you were perceived by others as you participated in RT? [In what way? What has impressed you?]*

The analysis, as with the pre-intervention focus group, and the RT sessions, was based on the three different but related frameworks – Bennett's developmental model of intercultural sensitivity (DMIS), Byram's *Savoirs* and the Principles of Intercultural Language Learning outlined by Liddicoat et al (2003). The relationship between these models is represented in Figure 2.6 in Chapter 2.

The analysis was done to gain insight into the affordances of RT for ILTL as described by the participants, and also to understand the ways in which the frameworks themselves explain and support the use of RT for teaching and learning.

Interview 1 Lulu

Lulu is a 24 year old female student from Guangzhou, China. She is softly spoken and gentle in nature. At the time of this research project she was studying English in the hope of entering a master's degree in graphic design. She aspires to be an illustrator in China, and was inspired to follow her dream to study abroad and pursue a career in design by a teacher of design who had taught her in China. At the stage of the first interview she had been in Australia for approximately three months and had mentioned in conversation some of the challenges she had faced in adjusting to the new cultural and linguistic environment in Australia.

Lulu's comments about her experiences of RT in this first interview were particularly interesting because she is quite shy and had not appeared to be especially enthusiastic or involved during the sessions. Nevertheless she said that she was indeed interested and happy to volunteer for interviews.

The interview revealed clear mental engagement and processing of interactions she observed between her peers during performances. It also revealed some very mature reflections on the influence of culture on communication, making connections between the lives of women in Saudi Arabian, Australian and Chinese cultures and identifying her own strategies for learning to be more confident using English. These insights are significant for teachers' understanding of student learning processes through RT.

Lulu enjoyed coming to a better understanding the lives and cultures of her Saudi classmates through RT. She identified the fact that RT is particularly useful in providing opportunities to practise using the target language while working closely together, and learning how to 'get along', with Saudi students.

I had a good time in the process...I learned a lot of information about cultures from different countries. And that makes us, I mean classmates, we get along with each other. Yeah, and know some more information about other students, the people who come from Saudi Arabia.

This demonstrates Lulu's attitude (*être*) of curiosity, openness and readiness to learn about her classmates' lives and Saudi culture and that she is coming to a clearer understanding of the value of *social interaction* (Principle 3) as a learning strategy.

By observing her Saudi classmates eagerly asking questions and voicing their opinions she compared (Principle 2 - *making connections*) and *reflected* (Principle 4) on the differences in her own expectations for classroom conduct. Rather than viewing this difference negatively - which would be typical of Bennett's *defence against difference* (Stage 2) - she valued working together and viewed it as an opportunity to learn to become more assertive and confident. This shift toward *acceptance* and *adaptation* (Stages 4 and 5) is clearly demonstrated when Lulu said "I think I have a lot to learn from their thinking".

Things are quite different. Saudi Arabians if they have a question, they ask it as soon as possible. And they want, they try to argue that, but (Chinese students) we not argue so much. This is quite different... Yes, it has a large influence on me. Because I think I have a lot I have to learn from their thinking.

Through interacting with participants from another culture and reflecting on cultural differences in communication styles, Lulu has come to acquire knowledge (*savoir*) of the processes of socialisation in her own and others' cultures. Even more important is her acknowledgment of the need for her to take *responsibility* (i.e. that learning depends on the learner's attitudes and dispositions towards learning) and embracing these opportunities to learn from others. The additional *savoir* of *savoir se transformer* coined in the Intercultural Dialogue Model (Houghton, 2012; Houghton & Yamada, 2012), introduced in Chapter 2, fits well into Lulu's experience, because she is making a conscious decision to attempt to change her approach to communication.

Lulu provided an extended description of her educational experiences in China using an example of learning to cook. She depicted students in China quietly observing the teacher and taking notes, with no opportunities for questioning, social interaction or practical learning. She views this type of social environment as conditioning students to be passive recipients of knowledge rather than active participants who are willing to voice their opinions or ask questions.

Like cooking. When you want to teach us how to make this soup, you (the teacher) just do it then we watch it, we can get it (practical observation). In China, they give us paper to write down the notes. You just look at it, don't do anything, you keep your mind there. If you have a question, hold it. Don't speak out. The teacher writes down the notes... You just watch it. You don't have the chance to practise.

Lulu contrasted this with RT, which provides opportunities for active engagement in the learning process and physical practice using the target language. She explained that the large class sizes in China are better suited to a ‘chalk and talk’ approach.

That is the difference about Readers’ Theatre. We have the chance to practise it...But in China we didn't have the chance to practise because, so many people. Now it still haven’t changed. And I think that way of education makes the students introvert. Most of them don’t speak out, don’t ask questions.

By taking part in RT which allowed her to work more closely in a group with a practical task, she became aware of the cultural influences on her own learning experience. Byram would describe this process as facilitating intercultural attitudes (*savoir être*) and knowledge (*savoir*), while the principles highlight the contrast between RT and the lack of opportunities that Lulu perceived in China for *active construction* and for *social interaction* (Principles 1 and 3). Bennett’s DMIS is more limited in that it shows her *acceptance of difference* (Stage 4), but does not acknowledge the significance of understanding how to some extent our actions and behaviours are shaped by cultural worldviews.

Despite having been discouraged from speaking out and asking questions about previous learning experiences in China, Lulu has developed the desire to confidently engage with others and to become more expressive in her communication when using English. She points to RT as helping her develop this confidence to ‘speak out’.

I think it (RT) made me a bit more confident about how to speak out. Because, sometimes I’m a shy girl and I just think it’s difficult to speak out. But now I can speak. Yes. I think it’s a really good experience for me to take the RT because after that I think I can speak more.

Upon further explanation as to how Lulu is developing this confidence, she indicated two important features of RT. These were observing her peers perform, and developing a better understanding of the logical structure of the narrative genre.

Firstly, by observing her peers performing in RT Lulu outlined the advantages she saw that effective non-verbal communication gave to others.

I would like to try to use my whole body, but I couldn’t do that, because I’m a little bit shy at that time. But next time if I have the time I would like to try. Like Judy she’s very powerful. Power sister!

When asked what exactly caught her attention when she was observing others perform, she mentioned looking at their body language, pronunciation, facial expression and speech volume connecting language and the communication of meaning. Her responses suggest that she is *reflecting* (Principle 4) on her own and others' ability to take a risk in communicating less hesitantly and moving towards *responsibility* (Principle 5) for the use of paralinguistics to assist her own effective communication.

[I was watching] the body language and the pronunciation... People who are especially good, are maybe Mika'il and Amir is also good. They have more facial expressions and their body language is good and it matched the sentences.

This same concept of developing confidence through observing others was reiterated as Lulu described Ellen, from the Ellen DeGeneres show, as a 'confident' role model. It appears this is directly related to her comment about imitating people which she raised in the focus group discussions, as described in Chapter 4, however she expanded her previous description about watching talk shows purely for linguistic input, to appreciating the opportunity they provide to learn about social skills which require using additional modes and semiotic systems for deeper understanding and considering how these might be used in learning and using English..

[To become more confident] sometimes I imitate some TV shows host. I imitate the intonation of the sentences and I learn a lot of the body language. Yes, but I don't tell to the others (laugh)... Ellen is the host... They have a very good communication skills [on that show] and I think this is the most important part of social skills. If I have enough confidence I can get the other things more easily.

This indicates that through observation, Lulu has developed a new knowledge (*savoir*) of different practices, processes and modes of communication and of the value of *social interaction* (Principle 3) using a range of semiotic systems as a strategy for discovery and interaction (*savoir apprendre/faire*). Bennett's DMIS does not clearly specify these specific forms of knowledge and learning processes but does acknowledge in more general terms the emotional, cognitive and behavioural changes that occur as learners such as Lulu move from *acceptance* and *adaptation* to difference (Stages 4 and 5).

Furthermore, confidence was acquired through moving away from focusing on the individual and unconnected word level to a focus on meaning making and

understanding the overall structure of each story. This gave her more confidence to act. At this point, she noted the importance gaining meta-linguistic awareness (Scrimgeour, 2011) going beyond the lower-level processing skills such as word recognition or decoding and shifting her focus towards whole text level logical structure providing meaning, and seeing the language ‘working’ for such meaning.

I realised that it has a logical in the story. It has the start and the middle and the last part, and you can think about it, the point by point...In the past I thought, learning English is just you memorise it very well, it's definitely word-by-word, not delete one word. Now, I know the main point, then I look at the main point and speak out. And have the logical; the logical is very clear and direct.

This is important because it demonstrates a change in the way Lulu started to view texts, realising the importance of structuring a narrative and the stages and phases of the genre. This realisation helped free her up to be more confident as she realised the logic of the flow of the story. This increased her capacity for *adaptation* in Bennett's DMIS (Stage 5), *savoir comprendre* in Byram's framework and also demonstrating the capacity for *active construction* (Principle 1) and *reflection* (Principle 4).

Lulu came to realise that she needed to take responsibility for being more to-the-point, using logic in her structure instead of talking around a topic when communicating in English. She described how she has come to a better understanding of the difference in patterns of communication between Chinese and English speaking cultures.

Sometimes Chinese they also talk about one thing but they circle around and you have to get the point. They don't direct to mention the point. But now I know to get to the point. I want it - I just say it. Not like the past.

Her observations show how Lulu has started to take *responsibility* (Principle 5) for altering her style of communication as a way of adapting to culture. She has found that memorisation, which is emphasised as the way to learn another language in her culture, is less effective than basing her communication on meaning-making. She had noted how the Saudi students were more confident in trying to create meaning, even when they were not word perfect in English. This shows that she has moved from an ethnocentric (Stages 1-3) into an ethnorelative (Stages 4-6) point of view on Bennett's DMIS, and is showing she is at the stage of *adaptation to difference* (Stage 5). This is

distinct from assimilation, whereby the learner's identity is absorbed by the new culture and instead, she is able to move between cultural viewpoints.

Lulu found that an awareness of cultural difference enabled her to alter her behaviour in the direction of the cultural context within which she is communicating. This involves *making connections* (Principle 2), and relies on *social interaction* (Principle 3). Lulu found that the whole RT experience enabled her to develop a greater appreciation of her cultural 'situatedness' and to appreciate the need to communicate effectively across cultures.

I think a really good experience, when I took the course of Readers' Theatre. Without that, maybe one year later I will think about it, still stay in Chinese way. Because we talk about one thing - we just go around and around. Now [when] I talk to my friend [in Chinese] is also around. But now, I communicate with you guys, just what you think, you say!

This was a very exciting discovery for Lulu. Within one week of participating she had become more aware of her own values and perspectives, recognising the influence of the educational system in China. She was able to talk explicitly and critically about these different approaches and she valued the experience of RT for the opportunities it provided for developing this critical cultural awareness (*savoir s'engager*) using English. Throughout the sessions, in which formal RT experience and informal discussion were mixed together, she had worked closely with students from other cultures engaging in *social interaction* (Principle 3) and learned more about their cultures and backgrounds developing in *acceptance* and *adaptation to cultural difference* (Stages 4 and 5) of Bennett's DMIS. She also observed her peers, *making connections* (Principle 2) with her own style of communication as they experimented with various forms of non-verbal communication and was inspired by the confidence with which other students communicated their ideas. The experience of working closely with other students also caused her to reflect on her own situation as a female and an international student. By learning more about the lives of women in Australia, China, Taiwan and Saudi Arabia, she *reflected* (Principle 4) on the way in which her culture and society have influenced her expectations and her career ambitions. This awareness is a necessary part of developing *responsibility* (Principle 5) for successful intercultural communication and also illustrates the usefulness of adding *savoir se transformer* to the *savoirs* already elaborated by Byram.

Interview 2 Falih

Falih comes from Saudi Arabia. He plans to study a master's degree in information technology in Australia and after that aspires to continue on to a PhD in the United States. Eventually he would like to seek a position as a lecturer in a university back in Saudi Arabia. Falih is married with two children. His wife is taking care of the children in Saudi Arabia while he completes his studies in Sydney. During the RT sessions, Falih had been enthusiastic and engaged. While he is usually one of the quieter participants who generally likes to keep to himself, during the RT sessions he experimented with body language, using voice and various gestures while practicing, performing and during the linked discussion sessions. Therefore, I was interested in gaining more insight into his subjective experiences of learning through RT.

Falih liked the idea of RT's potential to motivate students while learning language. He made reference to the 'traditional' forms of language learning, which in his opinion are not as suitable for learning a language as they lack *social interaction* (Principle 3) and do not engage students or draw their attention to elements of non-verbal communication as a general process of social interaction or cover skills of discovery and another language.

For Falih, interacting with people in RT was a new way of learning, which not only helped him to understand the language, but also to remember what he had learned. This broke the 'boring' 'routine' of 'traditional' forms of education involving repetition and memorisation. Instead, he saw the experience as engaging students in a fresh, motivating and collaborative learning environment (Principle 3 – *social interaction*) in which they *co-constructed* (Principle 1) meaningful language that also allowed them to laugh and become emotionally engaged in the process of learning.

It's another way. It's what you want, with acting, with people... You can speak it, and you can understand it and you don't forget it. But if you study in the [regular] classroom, you should practise and practise and then you remember... Traditional, it's the same; like what you did in your country. But with this method, maybe they laugh, and it breaks the routine. It's something fresh, with more benefits.

Although he contrasted RT with 'traditional' forms of instruction (Principle 3 - *making connections*), he did not clearly articulate a keen awareness of cultural differences that influence education in the same way that Lulu did when describing her recollection of

the RT sessions. Therefore, the Principles for ILTL show that for Falih RT created positive conditions through *social interaction* (Principle 3) and *active construction* (Principle 1) for intercultural language teaching and learning, however, using Bennett's DMIS it is difficult to identify a specific level of intercultural sensitivity. Falih recognises the value of different modes and placed an emphasis on enacting the language with others, thereby showing an appreciation for what Byram refers to as discovery and interaction (*savoir comprendre/faire*). At this stage, however, he has not clearly applied this to considering how these semiotic systems are a way to understanding different cultures and languages.

Falih also noticed other participants utilising both verbal and non-verbal resources as they enacted the texts, commenting that everyone learnt and changed together (Principle 3 – *social interaction*) developing in their styles of communication. Watching their actions, and analysing and interpreting them encouraged him to *reflect* (Principle 4) on his own expression deciding that he wanted to incorporate 'body language' or 'to act' as a strategy to communicate more effectively in English.

Actually, Amir, Mika'il, Judy, they change. And Calvin and Khalil... and Mohammad, all of us we change. This is a good method to encourage us to change... Because, when you see these people like you, they're in your class, and they do very well, this gives you motivation to be like them... Not just go to school, study and go back home. No, this is another way, if you have ability to act or to transfer what you want by body language or to act, I want to do that. Because it's a second language, and if you can do that, oh, you are a professional!

Using the Principles of ILTL, the *interactive* element (Principle 3) was particularly motivating for Falih as it involved observing one another, which cannot be done when working on privately read texts. It also helped him recognise and appreciated the diversity that existed amongst the group (Principle 2 – *making connections*) as people chose to express themselves in a variety of ways using non-verbal communication. This encouraged him to reflect on (Principle 4 – *reflection*) language and learning and to develop (Principle 5 – *responsibility*) his own style of communication.

Correspondingly in terms of Byram's *savoirs*, Falih seemed to appreciate the processes of discovery and interaction (*savoir comprendre/faire*) through the active use of non-verbal communication for expression. He showed appreciation for a more holistic and

closer to 'real life' form of classroom based interaction, which contributes to developing an intercultural stance, although at this stage he did not demonstrate a full understanding of the various cultural systems that present in intercultural interactions. Bennett's DMIS does not recognise Falih's learning as intercultural as it only focuses on attitudes and sensitivity towards cultural difference without giving recognition to the processes of development.

Falih described a general cultural appreciation for tradition in Saudi Arabia and its influence on educational practices there. He explained that Arabic is valued as an important language for Muslims around the world and that the teaching and learning of the language uses classic, traditional methods.

In my country we didn't have this method, just like classical education for everything. In my country, it's like a Muslim country and other people come from different countries around the world to learn Arabic. And Arabic they don't use this method. They have classical everything... But, because I will teach in University, Insha'Alla, I think [I will use] this method because it's good for them (students). By acting maybe they will understand.

Here, Falih drew a comparison (*making connections* – Principle 2) between RT and the forms of education he had received in Saudi Arabia and *reflected* (Principle 4) on how elements of RT could be used to teach learners of Arabic in the context of Saudi Arabia. As he himself aspires to teach at university, he explained that he would like to incorporate RT into his own practice (Principle 5 – *responsibility*) because it also gives recognition to the significance of physical elements of communication, often neglected in language learning. In this instance by identifying values for tradition and religion in Saudi Arabian culture and commenting explicitly on their influence on various social processes such as instruction in school he was demonstrating Byram's notion of critical cultural awareness (*savoir s'engager*): "an ability to evaluate, critically and on the basis of explicit criteria, perspectives, practices and products in one's own and other cultures and countries" (Byram, 1997, p. 63). It could also be argued that this statement indicates *denial of difference* (Stage 2) of Bennett's DMIS because Falih tends to assume that all teachers in Saudi Arabia use traditional methods to teach and interactive methods are not used to teach Arabic. Alternatively it could be argued that Bennett's model fails to allow for discerning judgments about culture, even when one has attained an ethnorelative stage.

When asked what he thought was important about using non-verbal communication and acting as part of language learning and RT, Falih commented on the way in which an increased awareness of how one is perceived is an important element of effective communication. At the stage of this interview, within one week of the RT intervention, Falih seemed to be reflecting more on cognitively processing information through non-verbal communication rather than trying understand how one's perception might be influenced by cultural viewpoints. He did, however, also draw attention to the significance of understanding or imagining the context when performing in RT, which is an important step towards understanding the significance of various forms of non-verbal communication in different cultural contexts.

If you think about how other people see you and you move to transfer what you want to say by body language and talking, for them this is benefit. If you don't think about that, you can't transfer what you want to say. But after you imagine the situation you can do a lot of things to transfer what you want.

In effect, Falih described the ability to 'decentre' which is a form of awareness of other people's viewpoints. It gives recognition to the fact that *social interaction* (Principle 3) is central to communication and involves *reflection* (Principle 4) because it requires considering how others might interpret various actions and why. This is related to Byrams' notions of skills of interpreting and relating (*savoir comprendre*) and skills of discovery and interaction (*savoir apprendre/faire*), however this needs to be more clearly articulated as important for developing cultural, not just communicative competence. Using Bennett's DMIS, Falih seems to be at the stage of *minimisation of cultural difference* (Stage 3) and moving towards *acceptance* (Stage 4). *Acceptance of cultural difference* assumes a recognition and appreciation for cultural differences and understanding of the need to develop skills in shifting frames of cultural reference.

Overall, Falih showed a very positive response to RT as a method of instruction for foreign languages. Compared with more traditional styles of instruction, it provided a fresh change to learning as it involved the physical enactment of language and working together with peers. He clearly valued participating in the active discovery of using various forms of language as part of the learning process (*savoir apprendre/faire*). This also drew his attention to others' use of non-verbal communication and helped him to reflect on and improve his own use of non-verbal elements of language (Principle 3 - *social interaction* and Principle 4 - *reflection*). The performative element of RT

provided a clear motivation to learn the content of the texts in order to perform more freely, and while at this stage, he was not yet reflecting on how different cultural lenses that can affect people's interpretation of language specifically (*savoirs*), he had become aware of the values of tradition in Saudi culture that influences the common form of education in his own culture.

Interview 3 Khalil

Khalil is also from Saudi Arabia. He hopes to study a master's degree in mechanical engineering in Australia. He is twenty-eight years old and married with one child. He and his family are living in Sydney not far from the university. Khalil is naturally a very vocal, extroverted personality. During the RT sessions, he was always willing to ask questions, offer his opinions while also listening and responding thoughtfully to others' views. I was interested in gaining insight into the experiences of Khalil, someone who seems naturally inclined to expressing himself and was also very engaged as part of the process of RT.

He reported being both cognitively and affectively engaged while participating in RT. While he found the intervention enjoyable, he also recognised that he was deeply involved in the language learning process through the physical enactment of the text. He noted the benefits of peer-to-peer learning he experienced and the personal construction of knowledge rather than receiving information from a teacher or other source.

Khalil described his overall impressions of RT as enjoyable and useful for remembering new words and pronunciation. He went on to specify exactly what made RT good for remembering language, commenting on the combination of physical actions and emotions or feelings such as 'hurt' together with verbal language, and the relational associations he has formed. This also indicates that RT touches the "embodied perceptions, memories, and emotions of speakers" indicated by Kramsch (2009, p. 5) as important, while often neglected, elements of language learning.

Actually, I enjoyed it. I never thought that it would be like this. I think it's good for teaching, good for remembering words and good for pronouncing the words correctly... When you act, when you're saying the word while you're acting, if you didn't remember the word, you remember the situation. And the feeling, and the action and reflecting of the person who is saying this word ... For

example, when Zheng, he said, ‘You’re hurting the baby’, I know the word ‘hurt’. I know what hurt means, but I don't know how to use it. So I remember the situation, so I can use this word with the sentence. This is perfect.

Khalil also described his discovery of benefits of the peer-to-peer (Principle 3 – *social interaction*) learning that takes place during RT. In doing so he acknowledged the range of learning styles present in a class and that for some, watching the target language being performed by a peer is a more engaging and effective form of learning than listening to a teacher’s explanation.

Sometimes, some vocabulary I don't know what it means. Even if the teacher says this means ... maybe I was thinking about something else but when other classmates act and introduce the vocabulary by acting it catches my attention... People pay attention. Sometimes, people prefer to watch than listen... So they will understand by the action. It’s like sharing information, sharing understanding about the topic.

He described RT as a learning process of “sharing information” and “sharing understanding” (Principle 1 – *active construction* and Principle 3 – *social interaction*).

He further elaborated on the way in which the embodiment of text by his peers, as they collaborated created a picture in his mind. This occurred as he observed his peers in-role as characters, and also those who used their voice to weave the story together in their parts as narrators. He described his classmate Muhui’s use of voice in the role of narrator, as effectively having pieced together the picture of the story.

Judy, she was very good. Also, Muhui was very good as a narrator. Yes, Muhui was very good as a narrator. When he used his voice, telling the story or completing the story, it’s very good. ‘*And he went to his father to complain about what these people say*’. It’s like the narrator, he is connecting the picture. It was perfect. It’s a great idea.

The contextualised, meaningful interaction or “picture” shaped through interaction (Principle 3 – *social interaction*) with others in RT seemed to be an important part of the overall experience of RT for Khalil. This fuller picture created by the contextual elements offered by RT, distinct from a pure focus on language, drew on both the cognitive and affective nature of learning to assist in mediating a deeper understanding of language and its use (Swain, 2013). Khalil’s descriptions of RT, similar to Falih’s,

indicate RT created positive conditions for intercultural language teaching and learning, however, did not make any specific references to increased intercultural sensitivity, using Bennett's DMIS. Khalil directed the discussion towards the importance action, voice and emotion creating a 'picture' indicating appreciation for discovery and interaction (*savoir comprendre/faire*). Although at this stage, he has not clearly applied these elements in considering a way to understanding different cultures and languages.

Khalil learnt to connect with the text and learn in co-operation with his peers as part of RT. When he was asked which of the texts he liked performing the most, he mentioned *Little Things* by Raymond Carver. It is a short story based on an argument between a man and a woman. As the story progresses, the baby becomes the focus as the couple fight over who will keep it.

It's like a real story...when you choose a real story and try to put yourself in this character, it would encourage you to act very well. It reminds you. Maybe it happened to you or you've seen it before. I was like, 'I understand what happens. I've seen this. I've argued with my wife.'

Khalil was encouraged by being able to connect his own experience of arguing with his wife to the situation presented in the RT text (Principle 2 – *making connections*). He drew on his experience (Principle 1 – *active construction*) to understand the situation depicted in the story, and at the same time, by embodying the character in the text was reminded of his roles as husband and father in his own life presented in a different cultural context. In effect, he was interpreting and relating (*savoir comprendre*) the scene enacted in *Little Things* to events experienced in his own life and culture, arguing with his wife. Bennett's DMIS does not recognise the value of this type of identification with other cultures through imagination. Khalil's experience of putting himself in a character is a *minimisation of difference* (Stage 3) and still in the ethnocentric half of the developmental model.

When I asked Khalil if he had noticed any specific cultural differences in non-verbal communication between cultures, he responded by making reference to some presentations that were given in class and the cultural comparisons he was able to make through observation.

Actually, I never seen Chinese people using body language. Maybe Australian people I've seen, but Chinese people I've never seen. Maybe I just don't understand, but I've never seen it. Maybe they use voice. Have you seen?

Khalil did not assume that others aren't using communicative strategies, but rather he wonders whether he himself is simply not able to perceive them. He had noticed that in general, Chinese speakers appear to be less expressive than Saudis and he was keen to learn more about how they do express themselves non-verbally. Within Byram's model Khalil demonstrates attitudes (*savoir être*) of "curiosity and openness, readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures" (p. 57). More specifically he shows an interest in discovering and interpreting other cultural forms of non-verbal communication. Using Bennett's DMIS, it is clear that Khalil has moved beyond *minimisation of difference* (Stage 3) because he does not assume that the expressive styles of communication used in Saudi Arabian culture are the same elsewhere. Instead he shows interest in discovering the perspectives held by his Chinese classmates typical of *acceptance* (Stage 4) of cultural difference.

He commented on what he had noticed about the delivery of presentations that students had been giving in regular language classes around the time they were participating in RT. He found that Chinese speakers tend to make less eye contact and to keep their presentations simple and brief. In contrast, Saudi students will elaborate and present an opinion on any topic, even if it is an area with which they are unfamiliar.

Even in presentations, Chinese, they do their presentation and then no more information. 'This is what you got'. Arabic – no, they use extra information even they don't know it. Chinese people keep it simple, keep it short, less eye contact. And less talk, than Arabic, Arabic people talk too much. I agree, I agree, yes. If you ask any questions about 'What do you notice about Australian culture?' or 'what do you notice about Chinese culture?' You will see Saudis will say, even if they've never been to China. They love to express, they like to express, they like to get involved...

When watching the in-class presentations in regular classes, Khalil paid attention to the communication styles of students. Every student was completing the same task, but he was noticing similarities and differences in presentation styles. In doing this, was able to identify how culture has influenced his own communication style and that of Chinese speakers (Principle 3 – *making connections* and Principle 4 - *reflection*).

This is also interesting because as noted above, Khalil indicated that Judy and Muhui, two Chinese students, were particularly good at using nonverbal communication to enact the text. This could indicate that RT made it easier for Chinese students to experiment with the use of non-verbal communication, when compared with making presentations or in regular communication. This was perhaps a result of the opportunities for the purposeful use of language that allowed exploration of various form of expression in the safety of the classroom context (Principle 1 – *active construction*) and of the benefit of working together which enabled the Saudi students to see how Chinese students were thinking.

Khalil had considered how he was perceived by others as he participated in RT, and in doing so, he also commented on the importance of conducting RT in the context of the classroom that allowed him to freely experiment with expressing himself amongst the support of his peers.

RT was a space in which Khalil could move between cultures in performance and reflect in safety on his intercultural identity as part of the process. By developing the confidence to perform in front of peers he is one step closer to developing confidence with interaction in other social contexts.

At this stage, Khalil appreciated the interactive and engaging learning experience provided by RT (Principle 1 – *active construction*). He suggested that it should be incorporated into regular classes because it was not only enjoyable, but he also found it very effective for learning language. In discussing different forms of non-verbal communication it was revealed that Khalil had noticed differences in communication styles between Chinese and Saudi students (Principle 2 – *making connections*), (Stage 4 – *acceptance of difference*) and was interested to learn more about the reasons behind these differences (*savoir être*). While he mentioned not being aware of specific forms of non-verbal communication used by Chinese speakers, he reported being impressed by their use of non-verbal communication during RT, perhaps indicating that RT was a place that was neither students' first culture nor the target culture, but a place where they could experiment with “messier business” of developing transferrable competencies for use in the real world (Carr, 1999 p107). Khalil himself mentioned that he felt confident doing RT with his peers (Principle 3 – *social interaction*) but he still felt uncomfortable about the thought of performing in front of native speakers,

suggesting that RT encouraged *reflection* (Principle 4) on the need to develop his identity as an “intercultural speaker”.

Summary

All three participants showed evidence of intercultural language learning as they recalled their experiences of RT. Commonalities and differences were highlighted through their responses. All three participants mentioned *active construction* rather than passive receipt of knowledge. For Lulu this was highlighted in the group practice and performance. For Falih the biggest challenge was to think about how to use the non-verbal elements of communication in performance and for Khalil the benefit lay in his enhanced ability to remember as he identified personally characters in the scripts.

Falih and Lulu both *made connections* between teaching and learning strategies used in RT. They also *reflected* on the underlying reasons for the differences.

A significant element of *social interaction* contributed to the learning of all three interview participants. Lulu learned a lot through watching her peers and valued the relationships that developed. For Falih watching his peers motivated and encouraged him. Khalil recreated the stories in his ‘theatre of the mind’ and found himself *reflecting* not only on how he is perceived by his peers during RT but on the importance of having a safe environment in which to practise.

The Principles seem to provide the most relevant tools for analysis. Bennett’s DMIS appears to be limited in its analysis of intercultural understanding. Using the DMIS, participants at this stage would be classified as ranging from *minimisation* to *acceptance of difference* (Stages 3 to 4), which indicates that they are in the process of the shifting from ethnocentrism to ethno relativism. However details of this process are more clearly identified by the other two models as follows: only the Principles, which have a learning focus, recognised the embodiment of text as an opportunity for practical and meaningful engagement with language through its *active construction* (Principle 1), which was a predominant feature of RT as identified by participants. Analyses of the important processes of *social interaction* (Principle 3) or discovery and interaction (*savoir apprendre/faire*) were also significant in the participants’ experiences of RT, but did not fit comfortably into the analysis using DMIS.

Participants were also highly *reflective* (Principle 4) about various elements of the learning process, such as their own communication styles, cultural influences on

education and or elements of the performances that resonated with their own lives. In various instances this reflection was accompanied by attitudes of curiosity and openness (*savoir être*), interpreting and relating (*savoir comprendre*) or critical cultural awareness (*savoir s'engager*). Perhaps most importantly, the ability to take *responsibility* (Principle 5) for intercultural interactions and learning is only covered by the Principles and now suitably identified by the new 'transformation' *savoir* suggested by Houghton (Houghton, 2012; Houghton & Yamada, 2012).

This first set of interviews indicated that participants had started to open up to ideas associated with intercultural language learning. Participants' responses to questions showed they had moved away from the solely linguistic focus that featured in pre-intervention discussions. However, a deeper understanding of the intercultural supported by examples from participants' lived experiences features in subsequent interviews for each of the three interviewed participants is evident in Chapter 7.

CHAPTER 7

INTERVIEW ANALYSIS AT 12 WEEKS AFTER THE INTERVENTION

The three interview participants were invited to a second 40-50 minute interview twelve weeks after the first. These individual interviews were aimed at gaining insight into any changes or development in intercultural skills and attitudes that might have taken place in the weeks following the RT intervention, and to explore with the students whether and how they thought that these changes or developments had been influenced by their experience of RT.

The interviews were conducted in early February 2014, after the Christmas and New Year break. At this stage the students had finished the first level of their preparatory course at the Centre for English Teaching and had progressed to the second half of the next level. During the period that the students had come together for RT they were able to discuss many points of cultural similarity and difference between Saudi and Chinese culture, as well as making observations about Australian culture. This gave them three points of reference and illustrates the often underutilised potential of peer learning.

The interviews were again guided by a list of semi-structured questions with paraphrasing and prompts as required to ensure that the questions were understood. The questions were designed to encourage students to evaluate the experience of RT and to avoid leading them to specific responses. In particular, as before, I was interested to explore examples of how the Principles had applied to their intercultural language learning, such as *making connections*, *increased interaction*, *reflection*, etc.

Participants were asked

1. *What are some of the main things that you remember from RT? [What sticks in your mind? What impressed you the most?]*
2. *Do you think there were any benefits from participating? [What made it worthwhile for you?]*
3. *Are you aware of any disadvantages? [What about the time requirement?]*

4. Do you have any examples of increased awareness of cultural differences? Can you explain whether and how RT might have contributed to this?

5. Can you describe any changes in the way you think about learning?

As with the first round of interviews, the participants' responses were analysed in relation to the three frameworks, as described in earlier chapters. The final question, regarding changes in the way participants think, is especially relevant to the additional *savoir* that has been expressed as *se transformer* or *changer soi-même* (Houghton, 2010).

Interview 1 Lulu

In the second interview Lulu described the two most important elements of RT being the confidence she gained and the interesting stories that were used that kept her mentally engaged outside of the classroom. When asked about what she remembered from the sessions she responded saying:

Overall, I will give two words in that. The first one is 'confident' and the second word is 'interesting'.

She explained that she had been intrigued by, and felt connected with, the stories.

The story (*The Gift of the Magi*) is very creative and it's attractive. It makes me want to know what the story is going to say and I want to know exactly what will happen next.

Here Lulu was again demonstrating *active construction* (Principle 1), but was also showing more evidence of transformation (*savoir se transformer*) and *taking responsibility* (Principle 5) for extending her understanding and *reflecting* (Principle 4) critically on literary technique.

The literary effects of suspense, conflict and resolution such as those described from *The Gift of the Magi* involved interactions that drew Lulu past learning as a process of absorbing facts to a level of engagement where she was relating to events in the text on a personal and emotional level. RT appeared to encourage her in this attitude of Byram's *savoir être* - curiosity and a desire to learn more about the way humans act and interact in varying situations and cultural contexts.

Lulu's experience illustrates why RT is often referred to as 'theatre of the mind' because it illustrates how RT helps students to engage more deeply with the text

(Principle 1 - *active construction*). The intrinsic interest in the scenarios used in the classes caused Lulu to continue thinking about the story beyond the classroom interactions in RT. She said “*After the lessons I was thinking a little bit more that ...*”

When asked to give an example of thinking beyond the story, Lulu described her reaction to the story *Little Things* by Raymond Carver. In the play as enacted by the students, a couple fight over possession of their baby son. The student’s representation of the disturbing story continued on in Lulu’s imagination. She explained how she watched the scene over in her mind, *reflecting* upon and thinking critically about the use of language, the context and the characters and how they worked together in the story. The action is made easier to remember because she has a visual memory as well as a textual one.

I watch the couple - they fight with each other - why they fight with each other and how they solve this problem. And at this moment I remember the sentence after the lesson. I imagine what the characters will be like - the appearance and the personality. I remember I think a lot about that kind of things at that time.

By predicting and analysing what actions various characters of the text might make, she also was also gaining knowledge (*savoirs*) of the types of cause and process of misunderstanding between interlocutors of different cultural origins and related these to her own behaviours, attitudes and feelings. Through watching others acting and by embodying different characters presented in text herself, Lulu felt that she was able to learn from the characters’ attitudes, opinions and actions, with an attitude of openness and curiosity (*savoir être*).

Meaningful engagement with contextualised language in the form of literature, and especially dramatic scripts, is valuable for learning language (Cunico, 2005; Kramsch, 1993a) and Hall (2005) notes its important role in drawing attention to the inextricable link between language and culture contributing to memorable learning experiences (G. Hall, 2005). In Lulu’s case, she also demonstrated deeper and new *reflections* (Principle 4) on the way the stories played out in the RT texts. She has extended her learning to considering her own culture, its assumptions and how these figure in language and other communication semiotics.

I watched some Chinese dramas. They don’t tell some exactly things at the first - they tell it at the end. But the western dramas, it’s the common phenomenon

they have the opinion at the first. And when I watch the first sentence at the beginning of the story I will know maybe the main thing around about the story.

In Chinese drama the crux of the story is revealed at the end and Lulu mentioned this as a memorable contrast with the RT texts, which she considered to be more explicit in their approach. This had implications for her, in the way that she imagined Westerners communicating is more direct and less oblique ways with one another. By considering the approach to story-telling in Western cultures, Lulu was able to make inferences about the characteristics of Chinese and Western culture on a broader scale, which is a move in the direction of Bennett's *integration* (Stage 6) and Byram's critical cultural awareness (*savoir s'engager*).

Lulu described how she developed more confidence when speaking with strangers because of her experiences performing and learning from the characters. Oster (1989) points to how drama promotes critical thinking as students learn to 'speak with different voices, [and] see with different eyes' (p 85, (Oster, 1989).

The characters, they also influence the readers to be more confident. The character's opinion, the characters' attitude or their opinion, how they sort it out (their problems) it's exactly influence on some readers. For me, I always have some effects from the characters and when I watch the dramas, some kind of opinion directly influence me.

One of the most important developments from Lulu's perspective is her self-confidence, something that she mentioned in the first interview after RT. She said:

Now I can communicate with strangers more confidence ... I can speak to the native more, more. Before I'm very shy, but now I can talk to the others.

Lulu was asked to describe confident action and she described it as having the openness and boldness to do what one wants, without feeling the need to have to explain an action to others or care too much about their opinions.

Confidence appears in many kinds of aspects. I think it's including what they want to do or when they find a job or when they communicate with others. They want to tell the other people what they are thinking, and they just do the things what they want to do ...

When asked to look back and think of any possible disadvantages of RT Lulu responded, *'It doesn't have negative things. It has lots of positive things'*. In order to probe her response, the researcher pointed out that approaching a text with RT takes longer both than other forms of reading instruction. Lulu acknowledged that RT takes more time, but she pointed out that RT encourages deep learning via *active construction* (Principle 1), *making connections* (Principle 2) and facilitating a better understanding of the text through practice and performance, which requires a certain amount of *reflection* (Principle 4). It also suggests Byram's *savoir comprendre* in challenging cultural assumptions. By contrast, she said *"If you put it in a reading lesson, maybe the student will just write the summary."* In other words, she is suggesting that the students might adopt a surface learning approach, which is more likely to leave them in an ethnocentric mindset, rather than moving forward into Bennett's ethnorelative stages.

When Lulu was asked about examples of important cultural differences between her first culture and the target culture she alluded to the West as individualist and China as collectivist. She said that people in Western cultures "do the thing they want" while people in Chinese cultures value the opinions and attitudes of the group and want to maintain a respectable self-image before making a decision and taking action. This suggested an attitude of *acceptance* (Bennett's Stage 4).

I think when I look [at] them just relaxing on the grass or they just take the sunshine shower on the beach, I think, if they want to relax, they will relax. They don't work overtime ... I think most of Chinese they, if they want to do something, they will care about the other people who are around, but the western countries they don't care about it.

In the RT Session 1 discussions, Lulu had referred to her observations of people relaxing and enjoying their lives as 'strange'. Using Bennett's DMIS this would be categorised as *defence* (Stage 2) in the ethnocentric stages, because at that time the difference seemed to challenge her existing world view and understanding of what is acceptable behaviour. The week 12 interview revealed that Lulu has developed a new conceptual framework within which she uses her understanding of cultural difference to relate to the more relaxed behaviours of people in Australian society. Now she alludes to people's ability to relax instead of working overtime as arising out of differences in values whereby the individual chooses to put his or her personal needs

and desires before the goals of the group. This suggests greater *acceptance* (Bennett's Stage 4), moving her into the ethnorelative stages.

If they (Westerners) want to have this thing, they want to eat ... they just say they want it. But Chinese people or some Eastern countries, they don't speak it out - just say 'Yes, but, ah' (laughs).

Her amusement suggests Byram's *savoir être* in its attitude of openness and also a knowledge of social groups and their practices (Knowledge *savoir*).

Lulu's *reflection* on these cultural differences (Principle 4) is similar to an experience described by Jun Liu (Liu, 2010). He recounts a personal experience of arriving in the US. After being picked up from the airport and taken to a friend's house for dinner he was asked if he would like a drink. Despite being very thirsty after the long flight, he responded 'No, thanks' because it is considered polite in China. He then regretted it for the rest of the night (Liu, 2010).

Later in the interview, Lulu explained how she would decline or hesitate to eat when together with someone with whom she does not have a close relationship.

If they are not my good friends, I don't eat - just being polite. If we have been seeing each other for quite a long time, I will try. This kind of things [people expressing what they want] is quite different and after I came here, I became aware of that. Now I know, it's very good. Now I don't think it's strange. Before I thought it was strange... It let me be aware that most of western countries people have confidence.

Lulu's comments show she is regularly *making connections* (Principle 2) concerning the influences of culture on the expression of one's true feelings, in particular the expression of desire. Again, Lulu indicated a shift from an ethnocentric view that westerners do what they want out of insensitivity to viewing it as an indicator of appropriate self-confidence, something that she herself would like to achieve. This suggests a move further into both *acceptance* and *adaptation* (Bennett's stages 4 and 5). By making connections through comparison and contrasting the way people behave Lulu has continued to deepen her understanding of her own culture and its values and the values that shape interaction in English speaking societies.

Soon after the RT session based on the story *The Gift of the Magi*, Lulu researched the story on the Internet, watching it both in English and the Chinese translations. This

interest in stories was not limited to RT. Lulu mentioned that her interest in the cultural elements of language learning renewed her appreciation for learning through watching dramas on TV. She indicated that she had previously foregone this method of learning English because she thought she should focus on the language course. However, after participating in RT she was reminded of the potential value of watching TV dramas in order to learn about cultural elements of communication. Lulu's interest and curiosity is characteristic of the *Acceptance* stage (Stage 5) of Bennett's DMIS.

One of the most important developments from Lulu's standpoint is the development of her self-confidence, which allows her to communicate more freely with others. Because Lulu had mentioned in the first interview that she would like to be more confident and less shy, I followed up on that point in the 12 week interview.

Because I look at everybody performances and because we see each other for quite a long time we become more familiar and it let me be less shy ... Now I can communicate with strangers [with] more confidence ... I can speak to the native more, more. Before I'm very shy, but now I can talk to the others more confident.

From Lulu's comments it appears that the confidence she developed in RT with her peers helped her develop the readiness to seek opportunities to engage (Byram's *savoir être*) not just with other students but also with people outside of the educational setting. He describes this as '*readiness to experience the different stages of adaptation to and interaction with another culture during a period of residence*' (Byram, 1997 p58).

Using Bennett's DMIS Lulu's comments suggest that she is at the stage of *Adaption* (Stage 5) in which her skills for relating to others and communicating within Australian society have been enhanced by the confidence she has gained from RT.

Lulu recalled how the students in the focus group discussion had begun by comparing the communication styles in their own and Australian cultures (see Chapter 4, Focus Group Results), indicating that this discussion had contributed to her existing schemata around the connection between culture, learning and communication. She again made the reference to her belief that English speakers learn to think logically and to communicate their thoughts more openly and directly than people in her culture. (Principle 2 – *making connections*).

Here Lulu can see how language reinforces a particular way of thinking. Her attitude is one of *acceptance* (Bennett's Stage 4) and Byram's *savoir être* because of her openness and curiosity. In particular, she noted being interested in the relational aspects of conflict resolution in different cultures (*adaptation*, Bennetts's Stage 5). Lulu had already shown a positive attitude when she described watching TV as a way of understanding cultural differences. Our explicit discussion about culture as part of RT appears to have helped her to further *reflect* (Principle 4) on her choice to actively engage in learning language and culture. Perhaps most importantly, Lulu's insight into her own learning styles and her preference for deep learning suggests greater *responsibility* for learning about both language and culture (Principle 5).

In addition to the change in her approach to learning, Lulu also referred to the idea of *savoir se transformer* when she talked about changing herself in order to "follow her dream" in relation to her future career.

Sometimes, if you want to do just one thing, and this thing, the other people they don't think it is good. They don't support you - But it's your dream. You want to do it. It's your ideal, your goal and you want to keep on doing it.

In order to pursue her dream of becoming an illustrator Lulu had been required to act with confidence, because her parents questioned her choice to study abroad at 24 years of age. Lulu has been gaining confidence from reflecting on the characters in the texts, and on the behaviour of her RT classmates and other people in Australian society. These changes are best described under the rubric of the Principles of intercultural language learning, because Lulu has been purposeful in *knowledge construction* (Principle 1), she has gained new insights through *making connections* (Principle 2), *interacted* with others in the pursuit of learning (Principle 3), *reflected* on the new experiences in RT (Principle 4) and *taken responsibility* for her decisions to pursue intercultural language learning (Principle 5). At the first interview Lulu had been more focussed on the cultural influences on language use, but in the second interview she appeared to be more observant of behaviours that she observed, such as people being direct and confident in decision-making. This appears to have broadened her understanding of culture.

Interview 2 Falih

Falih commented a number of times in both interviews that the stories in RT were memorable and that by contrast texts that he had read in regular classes were not. In particular he continued to connect with the two stories *Little Things* and *The Gift of the Magi*. In explaining how he had learnt from these stories, he described a process of first making meaning from the language, then understanding the relationships between the characters, and then reflecting on his own relationships. As a result, he described approaching the relationships in his own life differently since his involvement in RT. He identified two main factors - the embodiment of language in context and the use of imagination - as contributing to a better understanding of the text leading to better performance of the text.

I remember two things. It's the story about the man and his wife when [they] have children and they have a fight and he wanted to leave. And second one, it's the old story about the 19th century, about the man who want to celebrate because the New Year and he wanted to give his wife a gift. And these two stories I learnt a lot of things from that.

In explaining the benefit of the stories as a vehicle for ILTL, Falih went on to describe the 'life lessons' he had learnt from the stories used in RT that had particularly influenced his thinking. They were the stories that he could relate to his own family and especially his relationship with his wife. Between the first and second interview, Falih had taken a trip home to visit his wife and children in Saudi Arabia. He had also spent a couple of weeks of his vacation time at another language school over the break, specifically to develop his writing skills.

The first one [*Little Things*], for example, if you have a problem with your family or with your wife, don't do anything stupid. Leave the home and think about it. And after that, come back. Because, if you do it (try to fix the problem) at that time, you will break everything. And the second story [*The Gift of the Magi*], if you love someone, you have to do a lot of things for them, because they will think about you the same as you think to do for them.

He provided examples of how the stories had influenced his thoughts and actions in the weeks following RT. Firstly, the relationship between the two main characters in *The Gift of the Magi* influenced him to consider what type of gift his wife might appreciate

when he returned to Saudi Arabia to see his family between the first and second interview. He was reminded of a particular perfume she wanted and bought it for her as a gift upon his return. By *connecting* the characters and events to his own life (Principle 2) and *reflecting* on the events in stories (Principle 4), we can see that both Falih's thoughts and *social interaction* (Principle 3) were influenced.

When I bring it [the perfume] for her, she was crying and she loved this thing ... And it was really, really - a good two story and it's still in my mind. I can't forget it.

Falih extended his reflections from stories beyond the classroom context. He reported that enactment of the text helped him to engage, focus and remember the ideas from the story.

This is a good method I think, because it's still in my memory. I can't forget it, for everywhere I can just remember it and do it because it's valuable information and like, what do they call this, a good example of our life.

He also identified engaging his imagination as an important component for properly understanding the story as a whole, which in turn, contributed to more effective enactment of the story. Enactment is clearly a step beyond engagement with the written text, because it brings into play the full range of verbal, non-verbal and kinaesthetic elements to help fix the learning in place. This change in his thoughts and actions seems to indicate evidence of Houghton's *savoir se transformer*, or 'knowing to become'.

Acting encouraged Falih to engage with the issues in the text, to consider how the language is being used in context, and to reflect on the causes and effects taking place throughout the story. He attributes this meaningful engagement through RT to a greater retention of the content of stories.

The situation and the atmosphere are important to imagine ... When you act, you focus about the vocabulary and the grammar and the meaning ... you have this you are able to understand the story, the issue, the causes of this, the effects of this story and you can't forget it. I have been here [in Australia] for one year. I read a lot of stories, but I didn't remember any one of them ... You just have grammar and vocabulary and you read. Okay. Finish (*dusts hands*)

He continued to describe RT as a good way to motivate students to want to learn about culture and the use of non-verbal communication through acting.

This is what I was seeing - was all the people they want to learn about culture, about acting. They focus on everything because they want to learn; they have a motivation [through RT].

This explanation shows that Falih was conscious of the social atmosphere and levels of engagement amongst the group indicating that both he and others were both cognitively and emotionally engaged in the learning processes through RT.

In extension on the benefits of learning through acting, Falih described the way in which RT contributed to improvements in his style of communication. In particular he referred to a presentation he was required to give on drug use, which is a very important issue for him. In order to clearly and effectively deliver the message to his audience, he memorised the content so he could concentrate on engaging with his audience.

I just practised to give a good presentation ... to transfer my thoughts, my knowledge, my opinion, to influence them to understand the whole situation. If I just say like 'lelelele' like with no body language they didn't care about my opinion. But if I act, like with my strong voice, with my knowledge, with my opinion, with my body language, they will be affected with this opinion.

Falih said that RT had helped him to improve his communication skills by using a mirror (figuratively as well as literally) when practising. The use of a mirror is a strong indication that Falih has become more keenly aware of the need to consider how he is perceived when communicating, which is important for 'decentring' and looking back at himself, so he is both actor and audience, doer and analyser. He said that prior to being introduced to RT, he would not have thought to act out his presentation or to use a mirror to practise.

I acted in my home, trying out 'How about this? How about this? What kind of actions? How can I use my body language to explain this point or this point?' and I was acting maybe for two hours or three hours to understand it, because I want to improve myself in presentation.

Had you not have participated in RT you wouldn't have done this? (*Researcher*)

No, really, no. Because now, I understand, it's the most important, it's body language. You can transfer a lot of information.

The use of imagination and non-verbal communication are important in facilitating communication in general, but are especially valuable in intercultural communication, where new learners need to recruit all possible means of conveying a message.

Despite prompting, Falih insisted that RT had been a very positive experience for him and that he could not think of any disadvantages of the method.

Falih viewed RT as a good opportunity for students to learn about other cultures.

Through engaging in discussion about culture he began to extend his understanding of cultural differences between his own Saudi culture and that of his Chinese classmates. He could identify how his behaviour was influenced by underlying cultural differences (Principle 2 - *making connections*), such as conventions for gift giving, socialising and voicing opinions. In order to gain more insight into these cultural similarities and differences he took *responsibility* (Principle 5) by engaging in conversation with his Chinese classmates outside the classroom (Principle 3 - *social interaction*) and doing his own reading about Chinese culture.

Falih identified RT as the point at which he recognised that cultural awareness is an important element of language learning. The discussion about culture from the RT sessions encouraged him to 'go to the next step' after the classes, *making new connections* (Principle 2) between Chinese, Saudi and Australian cultures.

You are able to go to the next step after this (RT). Because if you learn about something or are impressed by that or think it is valuable, it's important to learn more about it.

To explain his point he shared his new understanding about giving gifts in Chinese culture, which he had learnt since the topic was covered in the second RT session. The example he provides is using two hands to present a gift as polite in Chinese cultures. By contrast, only the right hand should be used to give gifts in Saudi Arabian culture. Whereas this act could have been seen as offensive without an understanding of Chinese cultural etiquette, he recognises the culture as shaping what is acceptable practice in various contexts. This recognition of different gesture paradigms and their symbolic and cultural meaning is part of learning about 'multi-culture'.

In Chinese, for example, they give present with two hands. Then you want to learn after that, why do they do that? It's the difference between our culture and their culture. I think [RT] is a good method to learn about multi-culture. When you go to class they have multinationals and because of that you are able to receive the knowledge from the culture.

Falih continued to give examples of cultural differences he had learnt since participating in RT. In talking with fellow students, he noted the difference in cultural etiquette at a formal dinner for host and guests in both the Chinese and Saudi Arabian cultures. He gave details about the seating arrangements for the host and guests in each culture and described the varying expectations with regard to who should eat first between the two cultures.

For example, Chinese the situation when you have a meeting dinner, the guest should stand behind the host. And he (the host) will start, then you (the guest). He will finish, then you finish.

In my culture, it's totally different. If you go to anyone's home, you will stay in the middle, in front of the host, and you have to start to eat and then he will start. And after that, you will finish. After that he will finish. If you are still eating, he didn't stop eating, not until you finish.

As part of his explanation, Falih showed that he *reflected* (Principle 4) quite extensively on the cultural expectations for the host who is required to adjust his eating according to the guest's behaviour. He also noted the importance of gaining an understanding of such unspoken but very important cultural expectations.

Because maybe you are coming and you are hungry and you didn't eat. And we don't stop until you stop. If you stop, okay, I stop. If you continue, I continue, even though you are full, you should eat. And I think this is a good [thing] to learn it.

Falih's detailed explanation about each of these differences across cultures shows that he is aware and accepting of cultural differences. Using Bennett's DMIS his attitude is characteristic of *acceptance of difference* (Stage 4).

He also explained the difference between gift giving customs between the two cultures, with respect to the stage at which it is appropriate to open a gift and the proper way to present a gift.

And in my country, if I am going to visit my friend for the first time, it's better to take a present and give it. And he is unable to open it. After I leave he can open it. In China's culture they say it's okay to open it. But they should present it with two hands. In my country it's okay with one hand because we love just the right hand. And when you give it, it should be just by right hand.

The third example Falih gave of cultural understanding he had developed since RT, was about eating meals and socialising. This time he talked about the differences between Saudi Arabian culture and Australian culture, contrasting the formality expected for an initial social meeting.

And this, I think and Australian people, they like for the first meeting, they like to go to coffee and just take coffee and they want to understand what's your personality. After that you can go to have dinner or anything. In my country - no. The first meal should be dinner or lunch, they should drink and eat. In Australia, have just coffee maybe and after that okay. But the second time it depend what they want lunch or dinner. But in my country no, just coffee, it's no. You are unable to do that.

Falih indicates both knowledge (*savoirs*) of specific cultural differences and also an attitude (*savoir être*) of interest in discovering these differences in order to interact and engage successfully with other cultures. He also demonstrates *acceptance* (Stage 4) and an appreciation for cultural difference.

He made it clear that he values cultural knowledge and views his time living in Australia as an important opportunity to become more interculturally aware. He can see that the skills and knowledge he gains about other cultures while living in Australia will be beneficial for both communicating effectively and forming intercultural relationships in the future.

But I think it's a good opportunity to know a lot of culture and a lot of knowledge. Because when you go back to your country, what you learn from there? I learn English and I learn culture at the same time. And it's good because sometimes you meet, in your country or outside your country, people from China or Australia, then, you will know in their culture what they like and what they didn't like. And I think it's good.

Falih identified the cultural influences underpinning the Chinese students' behaviour. He had learnt from Chinese students that they have long school-hours, a teacher-controlled environment, strict adherence to rules and the expectation that they will only listen and not contribute to class discussion. He contrasted this hierarchical environment with the open discussion of ideas, which often takes place between students and teacher in a Saudi educational context.

They work from 7am, study from 7am until 6pm and the whole day is spent in the school, and just the teacher says 'Do that, do that, do that', and they didn't have any discussion with the teacher ... In my culture, no. You are able to discuss why you do that and what is the better for this situation. And the teacher, he didn't argue. "Okay what's your opinion, and what's the benefit?" He will discuss your opinion with you. If he sees the benefit he will take it. I think in China you're not able to discuss anything. The rules - follow the rules. No more; this is the rule.

Through engaging in conversation with his Chinese classmates (using Principles 1, 3 and 5 of *active construction, interaction* and *responsibility*) Falih learned about cultural differences in the school system and acknowledges these differences. Although it is clear that he prefers the Saudi approach, he does not polarise the differences in a defensive way (Bennett's ethnocentric Stage 2), but rather in a way that indicates *acceptance of cultural difference* (Bennett's ethnorelative Stage 4). He also shows *savoir être* in terms of his attitude of curiosity and openness expressed in a willingness to question his own and other cultural values, practices and products.

Falih extended his understanding by doing his own research on the Internet after the RT sessions were over to learn more about China (Principle 5 - *responsibility*). He learned that the Chinese Government plays an important role in controlling the population within a very hierarchical society. He was surprised to learn that Chinese citizens don't have freedom of speech, and are required to listen and follow rules.

And after that, I Google in the Internet. I wanted to learn more information about that, and what I found, it's the government law. No they didn't give them any chance to say anything. The Facebook, they didn't have Facebook. It's so shocked ... When I see that, I remember what the students told me.

He believes that his own society is less hierarchical, freedom of speech is valued and discussion is encouraged in educational contexts and the media. Sharing opinions is also a common part of conversation with friends. Although he did not use the term ‘critical thinking’ which is a skill taught in his regular language classes, he noted that Australian culture also values discussion, and analysis of various arguments.

And on the other hand, in my country ... in the newspaper you can say what you want. And they discuss it, but ah, even if you go out with your friends, always we have something to discuss ... I think in Australia the same situation here. They like to say what is the good reason what is the bad reason. They discuss why they do that, another reason for that.

It is clear from the comments Falih made in the interview that participating in RT had led him to reflect extensively on cultural similarities and differences. Part of the process involved *making connections* (Principle 2) between the conditions (environmental, political etc.) and *reflecting* (Principle 4) on the way they lead to the development of culture and are expressed in observable behaviours that vary from culture to culture.

Falih also showed a keen interest in understanding some of the nuances of communication in Australia (a desire for *savoir apprendre* and *savoir s’engager*). Following the RT experience, he talked with a teacher about prefacing questions or requests using polite phrases such as ‘I wonder if...’ as opposed to asking using the question ‘Can you give me...?’ His engagement with people moved from interacting within a group classroom setting when using RT, to interacting with his teacher from another school to learn how to phrase requests politely for use with people in society. His curiosity in learning how to use these phrases indicates an attitude of *savoir être*.

I asked my teacher in the other school last week about when I want to ask people, like ‘Where is the road?’ or for some information. And he said “First you should say ‘I wonder if I could ask you’, not ‘Excuse me, can you’”. You should... say like ‘Hello’, like ‘Excuse me, I wanted to’, ‘I wonder if I could ask you where is this street?’ or ‘where is the library?’ If you go to the pharmacy and you find some shampoo or something like this, it’s really nice [if you can say] ‘I wonder if you can give me more information about this shampoo?’

In this case, Falih may have previously been using a direct translation from his first language or his existing vocabulary and grammar to put together a functional sentence. To use phrases such as ‘I wonder if...’ requires a greater exposure to the language and a more nuanced understanding of politeness, which he acquired by initiating the discussion with his teacher (Principle 5 - *Responsibility*).

These and other examples that he offered, with regard to the use of various gestures, demonstrate the importance of ongoing interaction between individuals for the development of culturally specific knowledge and intercultural communicative competence. The experience of RT helped him to reflect on his own use of verbal and non-verbal communication within an English speaking context.

Falih was asked whether he could identify differences between students who are culturally aware and those who are not. In response he described people with cultural understanding as more likely to solve the problems that can occur as a result of cultural difference. He described the advantages of having a better understanding of the needs and wants of the interlocutor.

[The person] who come just to learn English, he will leave with just one thing, which is language. And he is unable to focus about another culture or maybe, if he meets people from another culture, he can't find the solution or he doesn't understand what they like and what they didn't like. But if he learns English and culture, they are able to travel around the world with he knows a lot of things. He can learn about if they like this or they didn't like it. I do that, or no, I will do that. But on the other hand, he who comes just for learn English ... he lost a big opportunity to meet people and learn from them about their culture.

The next step is to see the interconnection between two –to see that what is said in English and possible in English reflects cultural understanding and contexts.

Falih also identified problems with students who lack intercultural sensitivity. Observing insensitive behaviour in others caused him to more carefully consider how his own actions may shape others' impression of his country, demonstrating critical cultural awareness (*savoir s'engager*). In doing so, he commented on the need to identify people's preferences and try to understand cultural differences from within another person's cultural framework. This moves him closer to Bennett's *Integration* (Stage 6), where the learner balances two or more cultures. His desire to be a good

representative for Saudi Arabia shows him taking *responsibility*, with a positive attitude or disposition towards learning (Principle 5).

If you want people to know you and to know your country, you should be a good person there. Because you are like a picture, you're your country ... If you are good, all the people, they think your country is good and the kind of the people there is a little bit kind.

He used an example concerning a student from Saudi Arabia who showed a lack of respect for the teacher and class at the school he attended over the break.

Sometimes he didn't care about anything. He came late for the class. The teacher asked why, he just said 'Ah I was sleeping', 'Did you do the homework?', 'No'. It's like he was aimless ... He didn't care about anything. 'I will say what I want and I will do what I want' ... Because sometimes if you want to focus about the rules of the country and you should understand what's the rules and understand what they like and what they didn't like.

Here again Falih demonstrates a number of *savoirs* – *savoir être*, *savoirs* in the form of knowledge, *savoir faire* and *savoir s'engager*. He identifies the importance of shifting cultural frameworks in order to understand how people from another culture are likely to perceive your actions. It is evident that in taking responsibility for being a good 'ambassador' for Saudi Arabia, Falih has developed a high level of cultural sensitivity and respect. He is well into Bennett's ethnorelative stages, he is comfortable in using each of the principles of intercultural language learning and he is keen to keep on developing the *savoirs* that he needs for ILTL.

Through participating in RT, Falih became more aware of the importance of ILTL. RT as performed in these classes, with a focus on cultural connection, appeared to give him a metalanguage to talk about culture more readily. He could see more clearly that culture is embedded in language and repeatedly commented on how RT had increased his motivation to learn about culture and communication. He contrasted the attitudes of the students at the writing school with the RT participants with respect to learning about culture. He also reflected on the importance for language learners to develop an intercultural orientation to learning in order to achieve long-term success. In reflecting on what he had learnt from RT, he spoke of how it encouraged him to consider his own communication style and how it is perceived by others. This influenced him to pay

greater attention to body language and voice for any form of social interaction, and not only for formal/academic presentations.

Interview 3 Khalil

In the interview, Khalil recalled RT's combination of action with spoken language as being especially useful for learning. He described the way in which he had become more attuned to the importance of non-verbal communication for communicating between cultures and how it can also be used to show respect and cultural sensitivity. Since participating in RT, Khalil had continued to learn about Chinese culture through taking responsibility for initiating conversation and asking his Chinese classmates questions about new practices and behaviours he observed in and out of the classroom. Khalil reflected on why he thought RT provided an effective way to learn English as a second language. He explained that texts studied in regular classes do not relate language to physical action, and that this physical engagement was the key to understanding and remembering the target language. He commented on the fact that watching movies allows a learner to observe language and action together, but merely watching still lacks the physical engagement and the immediacy of being part of an active learning process. He suggested that, in regular classes:

When we do the grammar and vocabulary, especially vocabulary, we can do a small script ... For example, some students can pretend to be John using that vocabulary that is already learnt ... It's very good to remember, also to see, to speak, to pronounce.

This approach would engage *active construction* and *social interaction* (Principles 1 and 3). He described regular language classes as being quite boring and easy to forget. By contrast, RT ties an actual person to a character, helping to create a clearer memory.

The vocabulary that we take in *Language Leader*, we know the vocabulary, what does it mean, but we don't know how to use it... When I do a lot of reading for example, I can't remember, because it's very boring and there is no connection ... but with RT, I'm not going to forget it, because the people performs the character.

Khalil felt that he had learnt a lot about Chinese cultural differences, saying, “I was surprised by Chinese culture. It’s really a different culture”. One of the clearest aspects of the interview was his emphasis on accepting *responsibility* (Principle 5) as the following sections show that he had gained more confidence in initiating conversations for his own learning.

Khalil pointed out the importance of the teacher’s role as a facilitator for helping through preparation and monitoring, saying:

Sometimes you remember the word and you know what does it mean but you can’t pronounce it correctly. That’s why we need the teachers first, to help us... like what you did before. You share us with the character. And when we do the vocabulary, when we do it with the body language... You can feel it so you can remember.

His comments show the importance of teachers and students working together as part of the RT process and the power of combining action and language for learning.

Khalil described forms of culture-specific gestures that he had learnt since participating in RT and how these related to other forms of culture-specific gestures that he knew already. The topic of greetings arose during the interview through an unexpected conversation with Mika’il (explained in the next paragraph).

The interview took place in the vicinity of the language institute, where students and teachers often meet up. Mika’il came over and greeted us briefly as it had been three months since we had last been together as part of the RT intervention. As we exchanged greetings Khalil explained that in Saudi Arabia there are specific ways to greet people, when it has been a long time since seeing them. After we farewelled Mika’il, Khalil continued to explain in detail how many kisses are expected on each cheek when they greet one another, and how this differs in different regions of the Gulf:

In Gulf countries, they have different strategies when they’re kissing. For example, in Saudi Arabia, they do two times. In Kuwait, for example, or Oman, they do one time. In, for example, in Iran they do three times. One (*points to right cheek*), two (*points to left cheek*), three (*points to right cheek again*). Two for the right, one for the left ... In other countries they do one (*points to right cheek*), two (*points to left cheek*), and keep going, (*points to right cheek again*

and again), four, five, six, until one of them stops. (Laughs) ... [This is done in some parts of Saudi Arabia and in some parts of Yemen. For example, for a long time no see, you should do one time for the right, one for the left and then keep going for the right, three, four, five, six. Say, 'Hi, how are you' (*points to right cheek*), 'Good, thanks' (*points to right cheek again*). Until one of them stops, 'Okay, now stop'. In Qatar, one of the Gulf countries they didn't kiss the cheek, they kiss the nose, but nose with nose.

After Khalil reflected intra-culturally on greetings styles from his own region, he then related this to the interactions he had had with his Chinese classmates in RT.

They greeted from a long distance, just 'Hi' (*holds up hand and waves*). It's strange ... They freeze. They didn't do anything, I just see the reaction, [They look like they're thinking], 'What is he going to do?' and when I told them, they said, 'Oh, this is great. It's better than us, standing at a distance and saying 'Hi''. It's better, I think, it shows that we are friends and good friends.

Khalil's description of the way Chinese people greet each other could be interpreted as *Defence* (Bennett's Stage 2) because he refers to it as 'strange' that the Chinese students stood at a distance to greet each other and that kissing among young Chinese is forbidden in some places. He thought that greetings used in the Gulf region are 'better' at showing the closeness of a relationship. However, Khalil's approach to interaction with his Chinese counterparts can also be interpreted as *acceptance of difference* (Bennett's Stage 4). Khalil's sees culture as dynamic, with exchanges both ways and values the diversity that exists within his own culture.

Stimulated by the intercultural experience of RT, Khalil continued to *make connections* (Principle 2). He explained that, on those occasions when he had tried to greet his Chinese classmates by shaking the other's hand or kissing, his Chinese classmates stiffened in surprise. Xiaodan (another participant) blushed when he tried to greet her with a kiss, and from this he interpreted that his actions had made her feel embarrassed.

Khalil then explained how they overcame the embarrassment.

Muhui, Xiaodan, Calvin, they freeze, actually, Xiaodan got embarrassed.

Because I saw her cheek (*points to cheek*) get embarrassed really, I saw her face getting red (*laughs*). So I said, 'This is in our culture, when we didn't see for a

long time, we kiss the cheeks'. So she said 'When we say 'hi' we just say hi from a distance' (*holds up right hand and waves*).

Khalil recognised culture as the root cause of the Chinese students' discomfort and *reflected* on it afterwards (Principle 4). He developed a heightened awareness and interest in learning more about standard forms of greeting in Chinese culture.

Following this experience, which accord with Byram's *savoir comprendre*, and *savoir apprendre*, Khalil explained how he has learned to wait to gauge how the other person greets him before he moves to embrace them.

[The way I will greet them] depends, it depends. If they saw me and come over to me, I'll shake hands, like my culture, kiss the cheeks. If he starts waving hands from a far distance I will do the same. Yeah, it's interesting (laughs).

The RT sessions provided opportunities for the students to observe specific cultural gestures as described in Chapter 5, not only in the texts themselves, but by extension to the students' own experiences of gestures and the potential for misunderstanding.

Byram refers to the specific issue of gestures used for greetings in his explanation of *savoir être* "readiness to engage with the conventions and rites of non-verbal communication and interaction"(p94.) (Byram, 1997). While Bennett's DMIS assumes that *adaptation* and *integration* of another culture (Stages 5 and 6) are indicative of cultural sensitivity, Byram explains that while an individual may be intellectually aware of norms for greetings in a specific culture, some forms of greetings may still be taboo in certain cultures, especially as in this case, those involving touch. He suggests that evidence of a being a successful intercultural speaker lies in the process of *reflection* (Principle 4) and *analysis* (Principle 2 – *making connections*) by which they are able to find a *modus vivendi*, which satisfies both groups. Khalil has done just this, by learning through open dialogue and discussion about cultural expectations around greetings. This has allowed him to adjust his own frame of reference to engage in successful and respectful interaction with his Chinese classmates.

Khalil went on to talk about a YouTube video he had watched of an American comedian called Fluffy who visited Saudi Arabia (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ccnwzScp6bM>). The video gave him insight into how Saudi Arabian culture is perceived by other cultures and also allowed him to see

how other people deal with some of the uncertainties and discomforts of intercultural communication.

It's a very, very beautiful and funny show he did. He talks about it on YouTube. I saw the show and I was really dying of laughter.

It was an opportunity for Khalil to see “the familiar as strange” as Fluffy explained about his experiences in Saudi Arabia, covering sensitive topics such as the social disdain for comedians, segregation of sexes and dress codes. Khalil made the clear distinction between describing cultural differences in a fun and factual way with describing them in an insulting or judgemental way. He described the painful emotions he experiences when his culture is insulted.

But without insulting the culture, was just having fun ... Some people insult the culture, which is very hurtful. But when some people just talk about the culture, which is funny, it's okay, we can accept it. This is the difference ... The face, the voice, it's very important, to accept what they're saying.

Using Byram's *savoirs* it is clear that Khalil shows *savoir être* expressed in his interest in discovering other perspectives on interpretation of familiar and unfamiliar phenomena in his and other cultural practices or Bennett's *acceptance of difference* (Stage 4), acknowledging the need to try to understand the unfamiliar.

The good relationships that were forged in RT made it easier for Khalil to ask his Chinese friends to explain some of the cultural differences he had observed on public buses, such as waiting in line and standing up for the elderly, disabled or pregnant women. This led him to inquire further of Chinese friends:

I asked the Chinese people why, for example, when we go to the bus, you don't go in line, and just cross? He told me ...in China there is a competition to find a seat on the bus, there is a competition to find a seat on public areas, so anyone is like competition, [they have the idea] ‘we have to win’. There is no seat for weakness.

Through taking on the responsibility to seek a better understanding of the behaviour he had observed at the bus stop, Khalil demonstrated *savoir apprendre* in his “ability to acquire new knowledge of a culture and cultural practices and the ability to operate knowledge, attitudes and skills under the constraints of real-time communication”. (Byram, 1997, p. 61). He also gained cultural knowledge *savoir* as he learned the ‘first

come, first served' principle. By selectively seeking out information about other cultures Khalil is showing further evidence of *acceptance of difference* (Bennett's Stage 4).

When asked whether his approach to learning had changed as a result of RT, Khalil said:

It's changed in a good way actually because ... in the class we can control and make the story with our charisma, our characters. So I think that one is similar to [other approaches to learning such as watching a movie] but is different, the control. You know what I mean?

Khalil appears to be taking more *responsibility* for his learning (Principle 5) and for improving his skills for relating and communicating (Bennett's Stage 5 – *adaptation*). I

Throughout the interview Khalil gave a number of examples about how he is taking responsibility for his own actions, attitudes and responses to the cultural difference he observes and experiences. He has changed some of his attitudes toward cultural differences, such as competitiveness in Chinese culture or treating pet dogs as family members. He admitted that he still finds some of these differences difficult to understand, but he respects the different perspectives and recognises his need to learn more about other cultures.

Summary

Twelve weeks after the end of the RT experiences, the participants who were interviewed reflected on elements such as the use of stories, self-awareness and engaging affect for contributing to intercultural language learning. These elements seemed to open up possibilities for engaging more deeply with the texts, the cultural issues presented in them and relating this to their personal lives.

RT underscores the idea that learning is facilitated through engagement with stories. The students responded enthusiastically to the RT scenarios, which acted as a trigger for group discussion while also stimulating individual reflection as students related the stories to their own experiences. Their interviews illustrated the Principles at work in *active construction* as Lulu, Falih and Khalil reflected on the importance of imagination and the enactment of the stories, *making connections* between what they had learnt through the lives of the characters and their own lives. This occurred both in the actor and the audience roles and participants *reflected* on the stories from both

perspectives. In addition Lulu took *responsibility* to do her own research by finding a Chinese version of *The Gift of the Magi* online.

Increased self-awareness seems to have arisen out of the fortunate accident that the students participating in the study were from China and Saudi Arabia, two very different societies. The differences gave them many points of contrast to discuss in enhancing their self-awareness. RT drew the students' attention to the way verbal and non-verbal communication can contribute to both understanding and creating meaning. Observing other students helped them to make comparisons and led them to reflect on the influence of culture on both verbal and non-verbal communication.

The importance of affect was an element of that each of the RT participants who were interviewed made mention of. RT elicited enthusiasm, curiosity, laughter, agreement and disagreement within the class, both through the stories themselves and through the discussions that they provoked. Overall, this affective engagement appeared to be an important stimulate for the students in taking greater *responsibility* for their learning (Principle 5).

When relating these observations to the three frameworks, it became clear that Bennett's DMIS is perhaps the most limited. It focusses on the learner's transition from ethnocentricity to ethnorelativity, but it does not help us to understand the elements in the learning process that facilitate this transition, nor the complexities of considering but ultimately rejecting some cultural practices.

Byram's *savoirs* are useful because they describe the 'products' that emerge from the processes of ILTL, in the form of attitudes, knowledge and skills. However, like Bennett's DMIS, the *savoirs* represent goals, and do not tell us a great deal about how the goals can be reached. The additional *savoir* that acknowledges the transformative aspect of learning is important because it is within this *savoir* that students develop a different understanding of themselves in relation to others, a change in their cultural beliefs (as described by Bennett's DMIS) and associated changes in their behaviour, such as increased sociability in the pursuit of further intercultural language learning.

The Principles of ILTL provide the most useful way of categorising the actual processes involved in ILTL and an understanding of these processes is vital for intercultural language learning. The interviews provided clear examples of the ways in which RT operationalised the five Principles of ILTL for these three students.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSIONS: CONTRIBUTIONS, LIMITATIONS, IMPLICATIONS

Purpose of the study

Intercultural language teaching and learning (ILTL) is emerging as a dominant orientation to second languages education in Australia and elsewhere. This study set out to explore the place of Readers' Theatre (RT) among approaches to ILTL. RT in the context of ILTL should help learners to negotiate meaning across languages and cultures, facilitating successful participation in multicultural and multilingual contexts, and providing opportunities to develop both awareness of intercultural language learning and of using this awareness to further their learning and understanding.

For this study, it was hypothesised that RT would be particularly well suited to meeting the learning needs of international students studying abroad at tertiary level. These students have a pressing need to develop intercultural competence because it correlates with stress (Redmond & Bunyi, 1993) and academic performance (Phakiti & Li, 2011) in a high stakes environment, as well as helping with everyday life in an unfamiliar culture. RT focusses on the processes of communication, with active student engagement and interaction with one another, and provides opportunities to explore intercultural understanding through the use of stories which students can compare with their own lives and cultures.

The study builds on previous research in relation to the use of RT for language learning. It demonstrates that the value of RT is not just in assisting students to develop oral reading fluency as shown by previous research (Clementi, 2010; Corcoran & Davis, 2005; Garrett & O'Connor, 2010; Griffith & Rasinski, 2004; Kinniburgh & Shaw, 2007; Martinez et al., 1998; Mraz et al., 2013; Young & Rasinski, 2009) but shows that it also serves as a useful vehicle for intercultural language learning.

Three widely accepted models that are identified as underpinning ILTL were selected as a means of understanding the affordances of RT for ILTL and to guide the analysis of the data for this study. These three models are the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) developed by Milton Bennett (1993), Michael Byram's *Savoirs* for Intercultural Communicative Competence (1997) and the Principles for Intercultural teaching and learning, developed by a group working out of

the Research Centre for Languages and Culture Educations (RCLCE) at the University of South Australia (2003).

Intercultural understanding is an important aspect of successful language learning, so research into RT as a vehicle for ILTL can provide valuable insights into effective pedagogies for ILTL. To find out more about the potential of RT in the context of ILTL the study sought to answer the following questions:

1. In what ways might the teaching and learning affordances of RT contribute to intercultural language teaching and learning?
2. To what extent do the frameworks that have been identified as underpinning ILTL help to explain and support the use of RT in helping both teachers and students?

The project enabled the collection of data in three stages: a pre-intervention focus group discussion, the RT program (five 90 minute sessions) and interviews with three of the participants at one week and twelve weeks after the RT intervention.

In order to address the research questions, each data set was recorded, transcribed and analysed using the Bennett's DMIS, Byram's *Savoirs* and the Principles of Intercultural Language Learning.

Findings and implications

The Principles proved to be the most helpful model for analysis as they provided the clearest indication of change in the learners' ability to take responsibility for their own intercultural language learning.

The findings from this study suggest that:

1. The teaching and learning strategies used in RT contribute to intercultural language teaching and learning through increased student cooperation, drawing attention to a wider range of linguistic resources, the discussions that took place around the texts and around the relevance of culture in the stories, the way students related the performative element to everyday communication and the way RT encouraged increased cultural sensitivity as part of language learning. The great strength of RT for ILTL lies in the way it can be used to stimulate the flow of discussion about topics that matter to the students.

This study, in support of existing research, shows that the use of drama in languages pedagogy encourages collaboration (Rothwell 2013) and builds a sense of camaraderie and trust among students (Kramersch, 1993a; Liu, 2000; Stern, 1980). When working with learners from diverse cultural backgrounds, this extended cooperative interaction provides increased opportunities for developing intercultural relationships and increased interest in developing intercultural understanding between students, as alluded to by Liu (2000). In contrast to more common forms of process drama, RT works with scripts that ensure the distribution of roles, which can be especially useful when working with learners from various cultural backgrounds who experience different levels of comfort with expressing opinions, as was clearly the case in this study.

Students were encouraged and motivated by watching their peers embody the characters of the text and function as narrators. Observing others perform by experimenting with a wider range of linguistic resources such as voice, facial expression, gestures etc. helps learners reflect on their own use of non-verbal expression and to 'decentre' as they consider how they are perceived by others. All three interviewed participants suggested that each learner benefitted from reflecting on cultural influences on their non-verbal communication, and drawing attention to elements such as voice, body language and gestures as part of RT. This process enhanced their ability to question and reflect on intercultural communication and behaviour in day-to-day communication.

Discussion around RT texts, whereby students share from their own personal culture(s) and life experiences, can lead to an increased awareness of how their worldview is shaped by their own language(s) and culture(s). Discussion can cover culturally sensitive issues, which can challenge both students and teachers to develop cultural awareness and reflect on how to respond to diversity in the classroom. This study reinforced the importance of helping languages teachers to develop intercultural sensitivity and is consistent with existing literature on intercultural language learning which identifies the instructor not just as a teacher of language, but a mediator of culture (Harbon & Browett, 2006; Kohler, 2010; Kramersch, 1995, 1998b; Moloney, 2010)

The findings from this study clearly indicate that intercultural understanding develops over time and through personal experience. Aside from Julia Rothwell

(2011) and Erika Piazzoli (2011) who look at using process drama in Australia to teach German and Italian, a very limited amount of research draws attention to performance for intercultural language learning. This study shows the potential of RT as a specific type of process drama for raising awareness specifically about cultural influences on communication and behaviour. It also shows that over time, this extends to reflection on culture's influence on communication including patterns of communication (Connor, 2002, 2004; Connor & Rozycki, 2012; Hinds, 1987b), pragmatics (Eslami-Rasekh, 2005; Liddicoat, 2014) and social behaviour outside of the classroom. This study shows that the increased understanding of the link between language and culture is also coupled with a significant shift towards taking personal responsibility for intercultural development.

2. The principles that underpin Intercultural language learning help to explain and support the use of RT in a variety of ways

The existing literature on RT identifies it as an effective form of instruction for developing oral fluency, vocabulary acquisition and producing high levels of motivation (Keehn et al., 2008; Mraz et al., 2013; Rasinski & Hoffman, 2003; Worthy & Prater, 2002). However, analysing the data using Bennett's DMIS, Byram's *Savoirs* and the Principles of Intercultural Language Learning, showed that RT is an effective strategy for developing an intercultural orientation in learners.

As the RT sessions progressed, a move from ethnocentric to ethnorelative views amongst participants became apparent. Byram's *Savoirs* showed a consistent spread of knowledge, skills and attitudes with the quality of responses developing over time from the focus group to final interviews. The Principles revealed that the Chinese students in particular were encouraged to take greater responsibility for their own intercultural language learning in their day-to-day lives. The Saudi students, who were accustomed to a more interactive teaching and learning style also gave examples of new ways in which they are taking responsibility for their own intercultural language learning in their day-to-day lives.

The development of greater responsibility appeared to be linked to the way the students shared information about their own culture and observed their peers 'in role', developing awareness of everyday social interactions. They engaged in negotiation as a group and also experienced a process of internal negotiation,

thinking about how to perform more effectively. These experiences were all helpful in developing an intercultural stance as language learners.

The Principles are an effective analytic tool for studies that follow student development of responsibility over-time. In the context of this study, which involved a relatively short intervention, Bennett's DMIS revealed small developments in intercultural sensitivity. As suggested by a number of scholars (Garrett-Rucks, 2014; Johnson, 2008; Kramsch, 2002; Larsen-Freeman, 1997, 2007; Liddicoat et al., 2003; Mallows, 2002), ethnocentric views reappear at various stages and learners' development in intercultural sensitivity is not a linear process as the model implies.

One of the problems with Bennett's model is the fact that there are some culturally determined behaviours in other parts of the world that Western societies would never accept, and the same could be said in reverse. To take a stand against any one of them as a cultural practice would, using Bennett's model, be indicative of 'defense' or interpreted as a low level intercultural understanding. This introduces the vexed philosophical problem of complete moral relativism with respect to culture, a topic that can be addressed in the rich discussions that an experience like RT can stimulate, in an environment of respect and safety.

While Byram's *Savoirs* provide comprehensive descriptions of each elements of the model of intercultural competence, comprising attitudes, knowledge and skills or interaction, relating and critical awareness, these various elements of ICC were evident throughout the study with development in the quality of response. Despite the Principles only providing loose descriptions for each principle and some overlap (a number of principles were often demonstrated within any one learning instance), they best highlighted the development in quality of response through the Principle of responsibility.

Responsibility is important because it acknowledges the value of feelings of uncertainty in new cultural situations, feelings of embarrassment though cultural *faux pas* and the challenges of engaging with ideas that may go against one's own moral values, all of which are important processes of developing intercultural competence. Using the Principles as the primary approach to analyse learning, RT emerges as a space in which learners are supported with the safety of the classroom

and community in which they can develop an intercultural orientation to language learning.

Limitations to the study

The study has a number of limitations. First the actual RT intervention was quite short, conducted over three weeks. Ideally the sessions would have run over a longer period to allow for a more in-depth and consistent experience of RT. Longer sessions may also have helped. However, the fact that even a short experience of RT had a clear impact on the learners, as demonstrated in the interviews and RT session discussions, shows its potential to have a more profound impact if conducted over a longer period.

Another limitation was contextual - the researcher was one of the participants' regular language classroom teachers, who was familiar with ILTL and RT, which means that the study may not be easy to replicate under the same conditions.

Finally, it is difficult to determine at what point development in learner responsibility occurs, as Kramsch (2008) suggests. While the interviews suggested increased student responsibility for developing intercultural competence, it may be that interviews before and after the intervention might have revealed more information than relying on the focus group alone. For this reason, the multiple approaches used in this study were important not only for the study, but for learning, and suggest that teachers concerned with developing intercultural understanding consider not just RT, but the other contextualising learning opportunities.

The development of responsibility is most likely a result of a combination of factors. It remains unclear to what extent the development of responsibility was directly influenced by experiences of RT and to what extent learner responsibility develops naturally over time. However, many of the discussions with the Chinese students in particular underscored the fact that a more hierarchical model, in which responsibility is only rewarded insofar as it conforms to classroom requirements, as opposed to real life demands, is inclined to stifle risk taking and the testing of new skills in intercultural communication outside the classroom. Students referred repeatedly to the effect of RT in providing them with more confidence. The stories themselves evoked vivid memories and their embodiment in performance together:

You can speak it, and you can understand it and you don't forget it.

When you act, when you're saying the word while you're acting, if you didn't remember the word, you remember the situation. And the feeling, and the action and reflecting of the person who is saying this word.

This study cannot be used to generalise across all language teaching and learning practice, but this is not the purpose of this approach, which focussed primarily on gaining a deeper understanding of individual and small group student experiences. The strengths of the study are in relation to the insights it provides into the usefulness of RT as a teaching strategy for intercultural language learning, the kinds of skills required, and for raising awareness of the range of ways in which learners negotiate meaning across languages and cultures.

Recommendations and directions for further research

The study has stimulated two recommendations and a number of suggestions for further research. The first recommendation is for the incorporation of a form(s) of drama such as RT into language programs such as the university preparation course in which the participants of this study were enrolled. Development of an intercultural orientation to language learning is particularly important for students who are living in-country and preparing to undertake postgraduate study in Australia.

The second recommendation is for the use of RT or other forms of drama to raise awareness of and to encourage discussion and reflection on the many ways in which we work toward achieving communicative competence and how these are influenced by culture, and how culture is integral to language use.

Further research providing a broader understanding of the potential of RT for intercultural language learning might include:

- A case-control study comparing students who participate in RT with students participating in 'regular' language classes. This would help to identify any specific elements of RT that might contribute to improved learning outcomes, including greater personal responsibility.
- A continuation of this study, following the same participants and investigating the benefits of intercultural language learning through RT into their university studies, longitudinally. This might provide insight into the longer-term influences RT has on intercultural language learning. This could also reveal whether the students maintain an intercultural stance and whether this helps them as international students studying in Australia.
- Studies that focus on teacher development of intercultural awareness, and of exploring the potential for RT as a form of instruction which could also help teachers recognise themselves more fundamentally as learners and mediators of cultures and languages, inextricably linked.

In conclusion, this study confirms that RT is a simple yet powerful form of educational drama that not only develops oral reading fluency, but also presents ample opportunities for intercultural language learning. It has the potential to shift attention away from a purely linguistic focus to an understanding of the

relationships between language and culture. RT helps draw attention to the influence that culture exerts over both communication and behaviour. This focus encourages students to move from the familiarity of their own culture and take greater responsibility for experimenting with new ways of developing their skills in intercultural communication.

The three frameworks used as lenses in this study overlap, covering slightly different aspects of and perspectives on ILTL, and contributing different insights. Bennett's focus is on the development of intercultural sensitivity, but tells us little about the teaching and learning strategies required to achieve this. Byram's focus on the *savoirs* is also lacking in the answer to the "how" questions, when considering the development of the learners' knowledge and skills. The Principles however, are timeless and apply to any context for learning and teaching. They serve as a reminder to educators that the acquisition of intercultural competence is best served by an educational philosophy that places students and teachers in active partnership with one another.

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APPENDIX

Extracts of coding transcripts

Transcripts were read repeatedly to identify statements in which participants seemed to notice connections between language and culture or similarities and differences with reference to their own culture. These transcripts were highlighted and annotated as shown in the excerpt below:

RT Session 3

X: Do you give money to your girlfriend? – Curious about expectations between couples
 K: My wife?
 X: No girlfriend,
 K: Before marriage
 X: before marriage.
 K: you have to go to her father and then ask her for marriage and then get married. – Explains procedure for marriage in Saudi culture
 Others: Aaah
 [Kahlil laughs], they can't imagine this – awareness and appreciation of cultural differences in expectation
 X: Yeah, can't imagine
 K: No there is one year before marriage. There is one-year engagement. So this period you can get along with her, get to know her, adapt together, understand each other. This is long enough to get to know each other. After one year she can say I don't like you. – Elaborates explaining the reason for custom to his Chinese peers
 C: Say bye bye

These data were then analysed by being placed within categories outlined by each of the Intercultural models: the six stages of Bennett's DMIS, Byram's five *savoirs* and Liddicoat et al's five principles for ILTL. This is shown in the table below:

Approaches		Readers' Theatre sessions
Bennett's (DMIS)	1 Denial	X
	2 Defence	✓ Also, hygiene, also, it's very different as well, very, very different. Between cultures. African people in my country...they bury that chicken or meat in the sand, without anything on the top with pork and just [brush] off the sand and eat. It's very strange. Not in Saudi Arabian [culture], it's African [culture]. (Mohammad – RT Session 1)
	3 Minimization	✓ But you know, both religions (Islam and Christianity), the same. The difference is in the details. You believe that Jesus is a God, we believe he is a prophet. (Khalil – RT Session 4)
	4 Acceptance	✓ Shoes (are an inappropriate gift), because maybe I buy shoes for my friend's birthday present maybe our friendship will walk. (Judy – RT Session 2) Why the reason for that, like it's unpolite? For the meaning? (Falih – RT Session 2) The meaning because shoes it for walk. Walk away. (Judy – RT Session 2) (claps then laughs) Easy way! (Falih – RT Session 2) We some other things (customs) in my city, maybe Khalil or others not, but very important for me. (Amir – RT Session 2) Same thing but different meaning. (Khalil – RT Session 2) You say I like your sunglasses. In Australia is means 'I like' in Saudi Arabia it means 'I want'. (Khalil – RT Session 2)
	5 Adaptation	X
	6 Integration	X
Byram's Model of ICC using <i>Savoirs</i>	1 Être	✓ d. If someone visits your house, you have to pay for parking or you have to move your car from the garage. What is the situation? He's a guest, your guest, I have to move my car from the garage or I have to pay the money for parking. (Mohammad – RT Session 2) b. Do you give money to your girlfriend? (Xiaodan – RT Session 3) My wife? (Khalil – RT Session 3) No girlfriend, (Xiaodan – RT Session 3)

Reflections

After the focus group

I had the strong impression that no-one really knew what to expect from the focus group session and it took a little while for the discussion to warm up. Perhaps this is because everyday classes hardly ever ask students to talk about their learning experiences. Any discussions that do occur are usually focussed on language structure rather than on learning.

Once the discussion warmed up, I was reminded again what a challenge appropriate language choices are for students. To develop a sophisticated level of language proficiency requires significantly more exposure to the language and cultural understanding than this group of students has had, even though they are about the start tertiary study for masters degrees. While I am confident of their abilities to succeed, it is clear that they are not going to be able to express themselves in a way that reflects the full extent of their understanding. It is sobering to consider that some students have even less preparation before commencing tertiary studies than the participants in this focus group, who have had eight months in the university entry course.

The students Khalil and Lulu have much clearer speech than the others. I am interested to hear that they both said that they pay attention to the various entertainment media in English.

Another thing I've noted is the fact that the Arabic speaking students often need additional spelling and pronunciation strategies. I think this is due to the fact that they are not used to using an inconsistent pronunciation and spelling system, as in English.

For students who spend so much time thinking about the linguistic elements of language, today was a good opportunity to talk openly and explicitly about the differences they've noticed in language use, rather than being taught grammar, which is the focus of most of their lessons.

Understanding the cultural variations or reader/writer responsibility in use of language is also an important insight by students – this discussion was a good opportunity for students to explore these concepts. I think this brings them one step closer to thinking about comparing cultures and considering possible reasons behind linguistic and cultural similarities and differences in language use, directness, immediacy etc. and the

importance of these insights in helping students recognise the reasons for these differences. This has to be helpful for their deeper understanding of how these languages function and how they are used and understood within contexts of culture.

After RT Sessions 1-5

Reflections after RT 1

It was good to see how the participants were highly engaged today – they were bright eyed, smiling, attentive. Perhaps it is because it's the first time they've done this type of activity. From the focus group discussion, I got the strong impression that this is the first time they have been asked to consider the way they might adjust their communication style to achieve contextually appropriate use of language (both verbal and non-verbal) – and of course, they'll have the chance to practise different approaches.

Reading the story aloud in a group was helpful for covering new language and pronunciation with the group. When they split into two groups to practise the script and divide the roles amongst themselves, Amir complained that he did not have enough lines. I'm not sure whether he was joking or serious. My guess is he was half joking and he really would have liked to have a part that required him to use more language. Once they'd read through the script as a group twice, they seemed to feel that they've mastered it. I spent time with each of the groups helping them with language and encouraging them to imagine the situation and use their gestures, facial expression, voice etc. to bring it to life. I especially noticed how Falih and Zheng were trying to bring the story to life with non-verbals. The others still had their eyes glued to the page and were a little stiff and unnatural in their gestures.

I was pleased that there was some thought and discussion around the story of the text *The Bad Kangaroo*. On reflection, I think the behaviours that the kangaroo displayed at school were too extreme and removed from real life - throwing spit balls and putting thumbtacks on chairs. However the value of the text is as a stimulus for discussion, which is different from the use of RT as a reading strategy within the context of process drama.

It's interesting to see different people's interpretations of the story. I should have gone around the group, especially to engage the Chinese speakers in the group a little more to promote the social involvement of all learners.

My big mistake – I ordered baguettes from the university café for the participants, because the session was held during lunch hours. The participants thanked me for the food and ate it, but I could see the Saudis a little hesitant as they took the plastic wrap off the serving trays. I had made sure that there was only a small number of ham sandwiches because they do not eat pork. However, I hadn't thought that it would be haram to eat any food touched by a ham sandwich. Ironically, the vegetarian options were put on a separate tray. The Saudi students still ate the baguettes, and thanked me for providing lunch, but in retrospect I regretted that I hadn't asked for the ham baguettes to be packed separately.

Reflections after RT 2

I asked Amir to pick up lunch today from the Turkish kebab shop in the University cafeteria, where I've noticed a lot of the Saudi Students buying food. In reply he pointed under his right, then left eye. 'What does this mean?' I asked as I mirrored the gesture back to him. 'Of course, I will do anything for you' he replied. 'This means, I will give my most precious thing, even my two eyes for you'. Now I have some non-verbal communication I can use with the Saudi students. Thank you, Amir for picking up lunch, and teaching me such a wonderful illustrative lesson!

Everyone seemed happy with the Turkish food option. However, through today's conversation, I learned that I had made another embarrassing social error. During the pre-reading discussion, I learned that if you compliment a Saudi on something they own, their culture demands that they offer it to you. I get the feeling these offers are rarely taken up, but they will still ask you if you'd like to have it. My heart sunk as I remembered I had complimented a female Saudi student in my class on the colours in her hijab. At the time she politely thanked me and did not ask if I would like it. I was so embarrassed at the thought that it could have even crossed her mind during that interaction! While this project is aimed at helping my English language learners to become more interculturally aware, right now I am the one doing the learning.

Having grown up with a lot of Asian friends, and lived in Asia for over five years, I am familiar with many Asian customs and concepts. Spending more time with the students from Saudi Arabia through this project has highlighted to me how little I know about Middle Eastern culture (and that part of the world in general). This has sparked my curiosity, and I would like to use the time I have with these students to learn more about their way of life and customs in their part of the world.

Something I noticed in this second session was a good dynamic within the group. A lot of people were smiling, laughing and everyone participating. It makes me wonder whether sharing more about one's culture has contributed to a form of bonding between the participants that does not occur in regular language lessons because they don't provide opportunities for learners to share their national and cultural backgrounds in such a natural setting. Classroom conversations are usually stilted and formal.

Students also noticed differences between the subcultures of their national culture – different parts of Saudi Arabia have different customs for visitors. The students pointed out that there are important generational differences as well.

Reflections after RT 3

Even though the students performed well today, I feel they can be more expressive. I want them to take their attention away from the text itself and to focus more on the transfer of meaning in the different ways that they can present the text. I think the warm up activities help here - I will make sure to spend more time on them next time.

I have been thinking that part of the value of using short stories for RT is that it encourages learners to think about the social interactions that are happening within the text, and to open up their cultural significance. I found that when I entered the room at the start of the session, the students were already deep in conversation on the topic of couples and marriage, which was a strong theme in the story we were performing today. The Chinese participants were asking the Saudi participants about marriage in Saudi Arabia. Most of the Chinese students are single, straight out of an undergraduate program; many of the Saudi students are here on scholarships provided by the government. Most of them have experience in the workplace and have been selected to study overseas.

This has opened up opportunities for the participants to explore different cultural systems through questioning and sharing with each other about cultural similarities and differences. The atmosphere is much more engaged and everyone is genuinely interested to know more. It was a major point of discussion when Khalil said that his parents arranged his marriage with his cousin – in China this is illegal!

Falih is married but didn't bring his wife with him as most Saudi students do.

The question of having more than one wife also came up. The men said this is not very common and only possible for men who are extremely wealthy. They seemed to agree

that it would be likely to cause headaches in trying to prevent the wives becoming jealous of each other. Therefore, they agreed that it is not worth it!

Even amongst the Saudi boys there is some difference in perception about what is acceptable for themselves or not. Amir is from the capital city Riyadh; he is single and has spent quite a lot of time with students from Brazil. He seems to be more flexible in his attitudes concerning premarital relationships. He would like to find his own partner rather than have an arranged marriage.

In talking about these kinds of personal issues, I often wonder about the appropriate amount and type of information to share with students. Different teachers I've worked with have been reluctant to share personal information with students, but others are more open. When asked my age, marital status and ethnic background I generally feel comfortable sharing this information.

Reflections after RT 4

I am learning so much about Islam and the similarities it has with the Christian faith. These things never seem to be emphasised on mainstream media, where we tend to get a lot of our impressions of Islam. I appreciated the opportunity to learn and I was also conscious of the fact that most of the conversation was with the Saudi students while the Chinese students kept to themselves. I tried to include them in the conversation a number of times. It's difficult to know whether to keep trying to draw them in, let the talk amongst themselves or even draw attention to the fact that there is a difference in the level of contribution to the conversation...

If I were to relive that session again, I would keep trying to involve them and even comment on the fact that most of the conversation was with Saudi students – this could also be a topic for discussion and reflection.

I'm not sure if was extra time spent on drama warm up activities or the text itself with assisted students in expressing themselves through RT today. They appeared to be much more confident in using their voice, gestures and facial expressions in today's session. I was really happy to see this progress. I am under the impression that they are becoming more confident in exploring different personas that can be expressed in English. In particular Judy, who is very quiet in class, really got into it. I think others were also surprised to see this side of her – loud and confident.

Reflections after RT 5

In this session, I really wanted the participants to come out feeling they had been successful in their use of English through RT performances. I showed them short clips from previous sessions as part of the intro to the session. We looked at some of the vocabulary, using Google images, to find that Chinese and Saudi students both related to images of the desert. The Saudi students told the group about how you have to treat camels well – if you don't they will find a way to hurt you. It was also interesting to see different reactions amongst the group around the topic of eating camel!

Mika'il seemed to think it was a good dish for special occasions, while other Saudi students laughed at the mention of eating it. Chinese participants related images of the desert to the Gobi Desert, which also has camels. The difference is Chinese camels have two humps, and Saudi camels have one. This is an unexpected area in which both Chinese and Saudi students were able to find similarities, I was also able to show them parts of the Australian desert and camels in Western Australia.

In a way I was surprised that English words such as 'clan' and 'tribe' were totally new to both Chinese and Saudi students. I assumed that they would be very familiar with these words in their first language, but of course they have no use for them living as internationals in a multicultural environment. This again encouraged me to reflect on how society, cultural and the environment all have a role in the conditioned nature of language use.

After the Interviews

Interviews one week after RT

Lulu

Lulu did not stand out during the RT sessions. In fact, she was one of the quieter, more reserved participants who was quite inhibited in her non-verbal communication. I would never have realised how much reflection was happening throughout the RT sessions; in fact I saw few changes in her use of language. However, because she mentioned that she practised pronunciation as much as possible by watching videos and I'm reminded of Stephen Krashen's (1981) silent period theory. While not making much observable effort during the RT sessions, Lulu was actively listening and watching what others were doing. For me as teacher-researcher, this was an important realisation about the importance of acknowledging deep and reflective forms of latent learning. It may also indicate preferred ways of communicating for Asian students who

are used to listening to the teacher in class and asking questions or talking afterwards if they need clarification.

Actually, I can relate to this form of language learning myself. When speaking a second language, if I'm not sure entirely sure about the meaning of a word or whether some actions are culturally acceptable, I will refrain from doing anything. I will imagine myself saying something or doing something, and sometimes even do it if no one is around to see. I'll take a long time observing, collecting cultural and linguistic data about how to use language appropriately before I try to produce it myself – unless I'm forced into a situation where I have to use it.

Lulu also mentioned that understanding the logical progression of the story and recognising English as being more direct and to the point has given her confidence. This seems to be a significant shift in her understanding of systems of language and how this varies from culture to culture. Previously she had been focussing on memorising and reproducing language, now she is focusing on identifying the main point and logical sequencing in the use of English. She is also reflecting on the cultural situatedness of her learning experiences. Learning to cook through observation in contrast to participating in the cooking process is a good analogy to explain the difference between her learning experiences in China and Australia.

Falih

Falih is very willing to use non-verbal communication to assist the transfer of meaning. I liked the connection he made between specific forms of non-verbal communication and slang such as 'g'day mate'. This is quite a good way to explain the specific variations in non-verbal communication across cultures.

In his responses to whether he considers how other people see him when he is acting, it is clear that he is considering how the interlocutor is going to perceive him when he speaks: 'if you think about how other people see you and you move to transfer what you want to say by body language and talking for this, this is benefit.' He also mentioned the importance of being animated when communicating, not only to help transfer the message, but also for keeping others engaged.

When conducting the RT session, I was aware that everyone participated, seemed to enjoy working together and were keen to come to the sessions. However, because it is a form of language learning which is new to them and very different from the

traditional methods they are accustomed to, I was conscious of the fact that they may consider it a 'fun' activity rather than quality learning. So it was very encouraging to realise that Falih thinks he is able to learn in the same amount of time with a better quality understanding and performance with RT in comparison to traditional forms of learning. He recognises the value of social interaction for learning: 'it's what you want, with acting, with people ... You can speak it and you can understand it and you don't forget it. But if you study in the classroom, you should practise and practise and then you remember'. Here without knowing it, Falih is explicitly stating he is contrasting rote learning with interactive learning.

Khalil

Khalil was able to talk about the differences he noticed between Chinese and Saudi students with regard to expression. It was interesting that he thinks Chinese people don't use body language but is speculating that they could be using their voices for expression. In a way this is recognising that all humans have a means of expression, but that this may be influenced by culture. I also found it amusing that in a way he was making fun of Saudis by saying they are generally willing to talk on topics they know nothing about, because they just love to express and get involved. He is recognising and valuing cultural variability and being able to self-deprecate shows a sophisticated decentring and acceptance of difference in a well-developed ethnorelative perspective.

Another thing that stood out from speaking with Khalil is his emphasis on increased ability to understand, recall and produce language used in RT.

Khalil was also able to connect to the story *Little Things* by Raymond Carver. He said that he was able to relate to it because he has been in that situation before, fighting with his wife.

RT was an opportunity to enact that situation in a different language with a different cultural setting. He also saw the value of RT being different to an activity such as shadowing a movie in that RT forces participants to consider their own interpretation and expression of the characters of the story, whereas showing encourages copying or trying to emulate the actors; it doesn't require the creative or imaginative aspect.

I think it's possible that this creative or imaginary space that is part of RT is where the 'third place' is explored.

Interviews 12 weeks after RT

Lulu

Lulu was noticeably tired at when we met for the interview. She had been up late finishing assignments. It would have been very easy to reschedule but she didn't mention it. We had talked previously about 'power-distance' relationships between students and teachers in China, so I am wondering if this has influenced her decision not to ask to change the day.

During the interview, Lulu mentioned admiringly that Australian people are 'confident'. From my perspective, Australians have a range of different levels of confidence and I wonder whether Lulu has idealised what she sees in Australian society. After learning that she has relatives who do not support her career choice, it made sense that she wants to be more 'confident'.

Recently, in a teachers' meeting, one of the teachers criticised Chinese students, saying they need to learn to speak up fast if they want to survive in tutorials at university. If I imagine being a student in a school where I was not allowed to speak up for thirteen years of my life, I cannot imagine changing this in less than a year. I have come to think that more open classroom discussion around the effect of culture on beliefs, behaviours and expectations would be more helpful for students than simply assigning marks for performance in mock tutorials as is current practice. It was clear that teachers have a responsibility to deepen their cultural understanding if they are to match teaching practices with students' learning needs in intercultural communication.

Falih

I was really impressed with Falih's description of spending hours in front of the mirror memorising and practicing his presentation, because he wanted to get the non-verbals just right. He said that he had learnt that body language is very important for communicating, which is one of the things I aimed to draw to students' attention through the sessions. I was also really impressed to find out how many specific details about Chinese culture Falih had learnt through talking with his classmates. He knew the details of how to give gifts and how the hosts and guests should be seated at a formal dinner. These topics were touched on in RT but he had obviously taken responsibility for researching them further.

As each of the participants seems to be mentioning that they are able to remember more of the content and language from stories and their embodiment via RT, I am surprised that drama is still not being used more in language classrooms. This type of activity could easily be incorporated. I think drama-based activities are undervalued. In fact, from the participants' responses a much deeper form of engagement with language and ideas seems to have taken place through RT than the texts studied in regular classes.

The benefits of better intercultural communication are working both ways. Through talking with Falih I learnt about the situation with drugs in his country. I suppose in Saudi Arabia, where there are a lot of extremely wealthy people, drugs are going to be bought. It appears that many people in Saudi Arabia are afraid that once the oil runs out there will be uprisings as a continuation of the Arab Spring.

A lot of Saudi people feel they are out of touch with the rest of the world and need to become a more modern country. I love learning more about this region of the world through talking with students. I look at Aljazeera online from time to time, but it is much more meaningful to learn about the situation from people like Falih and Khalil.

Khalil

Again, I found myself learning so much about Saudi culture through the interview with Khalil. I was surprised to learn how generous Saudis can be to one another. Khalil "tweeted" that he was going to Sydney and asked for help from anyone who lives here. A Saudi in Sydney saw the tweet, got in contact, picked him up from the airport, booked the hotel and helped him find an apartment!

Two days after Khalil arrived in Australia he saw girls dancing in the street at Darling Harbour and stared wide-eyed. Someone next to him called him a 'creep' and he asked me the meaning of the word because he couldn't find it when he looked it up. Khalil said he couldn't even go walking in the park with his wife because she got upset because she saw him looking at a woman walking by.

When I asked Khalil about greetings between women, he assured me that it's perfectly fine for women to embrace other women when greeting, but they do not have their photos taken without their husband's permission. He said that many Saudi women have Facebook accounts but that they won't put up any pictures of themselves, to remain modest, which is a highly valued trait.

While I think Khalil believes that modesty is what women want for themselves, the concept of women being controlled by men is uncomfortable for me. I can imagine that there are many women in Saudi Arabia who have thoughtful and respectful men in their lives and feel happy and protected. However, in a situation where the woman's choice clashed with the men in her life, it could be very distressing.

The RT stories provided a very useful stimulus for many of the discussion around relationships in China and Saudi Arabia, and I was aware of a number of other scripts that could be used in this way, if only I had had a longer period of time to work on RT with these students.