# Learning as Reciprocal, Interpretive Meaning-Making: A View From Collaborative Research Into the Professional Learning of Teachers of Languages

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With globalization and advances in communication technologies, the movement of people and their ideas and knowledge has increased in ways and at a pace that are unprecedented. This movement changes the very nature of multilingualism and of language, culture, and language learning. Languages education, in this context, needs to build on the diversity of languages and other semiotic modes that learners bring to the classroom, as well as their diverse biographies and trajectories of experience, knowledge, language, and culture. Equally, the context demands a reconceptualization of the role of teachers of languages. Teachers enact the teaching of particular languages in their local context as members of distinctive multilingual and multicultural communities. They bring their own particular repertoires of languages, cultures, and histories of experiences that shape their frameworks of knowledge, understandings, values, and practices. It is these frameworks of interpretive resources that they use in mediating language learning with students who, in turn, use their own interpretive resources. In this article I draw on collaborative research with teachers of languages to investigate teacher understanding of the preconceptions, often tacit, that they bring to their teaching practice in the diverse interlinguistic and intercultural contexts of primary and secondary school education in Australia. I describe an expanded view of language, culture, and learning, the three fundamental concepts in languages education. Discussion follows on debates about the appropriate knowledge base and whether discourses about "learning to apply formal knowledge" and "best practice" in teacher professional learning are sufficient to assist in the development of teachers' capability to interpret their own teaching and learning practices and their students' learning as acts of reciprocal meaning-making in the context of local and global diversity.

*Keywords*: globalization; intercultural language learning; teacher education

THE CONTEXT OF GLOBALIZATION AND ITS impact on both education in general and languages education in particular, together with expanded theories of language, culture, and learning, provide a rationale and basis for change in languages teaching and learning and, equally, in the professional learning of teachers.

Appadurai (1996) describes the dynamic process of globalization through a concept of *scapes,* of which he describes five: *ethnoscapes* (flows of people in particular, their knowledge of languages and cultures), *technoscapes* (diverse technologies), *financescapes* (flow of financial resources), *mediascapes* (flow of information), and *ideoscapes* (flow of ideas). These categories provide a way of understanding the dimensions and scope of globalization. The process is yielding an intensification of linguistic and cultural diversity, captured by Vertovec (2009, 2010) with the term *superdiversity.* It permeates society and all its facets of work and life, including education in general and languages education[1] in particular (Blommaert, 2010).

These changes necessarily require a change in the role of teachers of languages, for it is well recognized that it is teachers who have the greatest impact on student learning (Darling–Hammond, 2000) and who are the key to educational change (Cochran–Smith & Lytle, 2009). In addition, it is teachers who have the responsibility to manage the complex diversity of the classroom, described by Ball (2009) as "a contact zone" (p. 49). The change in the role of teachers, in turn, necessitates a change in teacher education to meet the challenges of the dynamic nature of learning in the context of diversity. This is distinctively so for teachers of languages, whose learning area is both an area of learning in its own right and a medium for learning.

In this article I discuss briefly the process of globalization and its impact on languages education, as a researcher in teacher education in Australia. Drawing upon a case study of the professional learning of a teacher of Chinese, I consider the way in which understandings of the three fundamental concepts in languages education—language, culture, and learning—need to be expanded in this context. I then outline the challenges that this expanded interlinguistic and intercultural view of language teaching and learning presents to curriculum development, teaching, learning, and assessment in languages education, and implications for the role of language teachers in primary and secondary school education. Through a discussion of the debate about the knowledge base in the professional learning for language teachers, I outline the requirements of teacher learning that would begin to address the challenges of an interlinguistic and intercultural view of language teaching and learning in the context of learner diversity brought about through globalization. Drawing on another collaborative research study I have

conducted with primary and secondary language teachers, investigating the practices of language teaching and learning and the development of teacher learning, I illustrate the complex nature of the professional learning of teachers. I argue that what is needed in teacher professional learning is: (a) to develop teachers' capability to critically examine their own preconceptions, their teaching, learning, and assessment practices, and their students' learning, with a focus on meaning-making in the context of diversity in and out of the languages classroom and (b) through such developmental processes, to gain a deeper understanding of the interpretive and reflective nature of language learning that leads to an awareness of themselves as participants, with their learners, in reciprocal interpretation of meaning-making.

## THE PROCESS OF GLOBALIZATION AND ITS IMPACT ON LANGUAGES EDUCATION

Globalization is changing the face of social, cultural, and linguistic diversity in societies. Blommaert, Leppänen, and Spotti (2012) describe the complexity and challenge that surround the phenomenon of multilingualism in contemporary times where postmodern, "impure" (p. 2) forms of language use (hybridity, multiplicity, mixing, crossing) come up against modernist ideologies of language and the ethnolinguistic assumption that sees language use in a one-on-one relationship with an ethnic or cultural group. They discuss the "danger that multilingualism is assumed to pose to what is taken to be the orderly, pure and normal state of affairs" (p. 13). They note the confusion and ambivalence that this complexity poses for teachers and schools as they seek to work in the context of intensified student diversity.

In the report on the project Globalisation and Linguistic Competencies, conducted through the OECD's Centre for Educational Research and Innovation, Della Chiesa, Scott, and Hinton (2012) highlight the crucial role of language learning, both as an area of learning in its own right to develop bi/multilingualism and as a means for learning and literacy development that impacts strongly on learner achievements. They identify three main reasons why, in this time of globalization, language learning is increasingly important. First, language learning is "central to politics, economics, history and most obviously education" and they see that "language learning is not isolated, but totally enmeshed with all the important issues of the future (. . . and of)

humanity" (p. 23). Second, they note that, across the world, proficiency in the language of instruction is one of the strongest predictors of academic achievement among immigrant children, because language, literacy, and learning shape learner achievement. Third, they draw a connection among language learning, improved communication, and global understanding. In this context, it is critical to develop language capabilities, understood as learning to communicate successfully, to exchange meaning across languages and cultures, and, through reflection, to develop an understanding of the processes involved. Mobility, mixing, and political dynamics are now central concerns in the study of languages.

Globalization is changing the very nature of the phenomena of multilingualism, multiculturalism, and learning. Stroud and Heugh (2011) describe the need to change classrooms and curricula. They state that classrooms

> need to be able to engage with and build on the diversity in semiotic modes that learners bring to the classroom (. . .). The shifting nature of learner personae and subjectivities point to the need for new understandings of the teaching/learning process (. . .) particularly to individuation to accommodate different types of learning biographies emanating from the heterogeneity of learning. (p. 424)

This kind of multilingualism and multiculturalism in education requires an understanding of the diversity of learners, the diverse languages used by learners to achieve a range of purposes in diverse contexts, and the diverse life–worlds and trajectories of experiences that they bring to their learning. This changes the conditions for learning, including the need to provide different pathways and learning experiences for learners who have a home background in the target language (heritage language learners) and those who are learning the target language as an additional one (second language learners). It also changes policies and learning cultures.

In sociolinguistics and applied linguistics, fields that inform languages education, the response to the phenomenon of globalization and superdiversity includes an increasing range of manifestations of what might be called multilingual views of language learning. All of these manifestations incorporate in some way Cook's (2007) notion of *multicompetence*, that is, the recognition of the coexistence of more than one language in the same mind in the process of language use and language learning. These views recognize that in language teaching and learning, it is necessary to take into account all the languages and varieties available to the learners. For example, for learners who have a home background in Chinese and who are learning Chinese in Australia, it means building on and connecting the particular language spoken at home (let us say, Cantonese) and particular modes and domains in which it is used, to spoken and written Putonghua on the one hand, and to English on the other hand. For those learning Chinese as an additional language in Australia, for example, it means building a capability in Chinese by drawing on their prior learning of at least English, and any other languages in addition to English that are part of their repertoire. For all learners, therefore, in the process of using and learning a particular language there are always at least two and, often, more languages at play at the same time. When understood in this way, language learning can no longer be conceived as a monolingual act of acquiring a particular "target" language and treating learners' languages as parallel systems; rather, it needs to be understood as a process of 'moving between' the diverse linguistic and cultural systems in the mix with learners drawing upon their entire repertoire in order to make meaning. As such, the process of learning languages is always interlinguistic and intercultural with the goal of language learning becoming the development of "functional multilingualism" (Byrnes, 2006, p. 244).

Education researchers have captured various facets of language use and language learning understood in this way and have coined different terms to capture the complexity of this kind of multilingualism. Franceschini (2011), for example, sees multicompetence as embracing an expansion in language varieties to include not only national languages but also regional, minority, migrant, sign languages, and dialects. Cenoz and Gorter (2011) advocate a "holistic approach to language education that takes into account all of the languages in the learner's repertoires" (p. 339). Li Wei (2011) discusses multilinguality, multimodality, and code- and mode-switching to describe the fluidity in language use and learning in complementary schools. Canagarajah (2011) refers to code meshing in academic writing. García (2009) sees language use and language learning as a process of "translanguaging" (p. 45) in which learners draw on the diverse languages that form their repertoire as on one single, extended, linguistic, and semiotic repertoire to do, to know, to mean, and to be. All of these manifestations seek to capture the use of

multiple languages in the exchange of meanings in educational settings.

What is less foregrounded in these manifestations are two further dimensions that are necessary in the context of interlinguistic and intercultural language use and language learning. The first dimension relates to an understanding of both the act of language use in communication and the act of language learning as involving the interpretation of meaning, which is particularly complex when it takes place across diverse linguistic and cultural systems. This process entails a questioning of one's own and others' assumptions and positioning and consideration of intentions and expectations. The second dimension relates to the processes of reflection which allow for an understanding of the processes of interpretation and meaning-making and the role of self in relation to the other in the exchange. This dimension confers consciousness to the act of exchange.

Discussing the changing nature of literacy education in the globalized world, Hasan (2003) describes a shift from what she calls *recognition literacy* and *action literacy* to *reflection literacy*, introducing a reflective dimension to the development of language and literacy. The first form of literacy, recognition literacy, refers to the regular kinds of literacy practices typical in education, such as encoding and decoding language. The second form, action literacy, enables learners to "write to mean," (p. 446), including self-expression and the production of texts in genres that are educationally valued. The third form, reflection literacy, is the form that Hasan recommends as a goal, and which encompasses and goes beyond the first two:

> [I]t aims to create in the pupil an understanding of reading and writing as bearers of deep social significance, not simply as a vehicle for information but as a potent instrument of social formation: [I]t is a form of literacy that would go beyond simple interpretation to reflection on how the 'same' words can be made to construe different meanings and what is the significance of such semantic construals. This implies that reflection literacy moves from comprehension into enquiry: [T]he literate person should be able to interrogate the wording and the meaning of the utterance—why these words, what might they achieve, to whose loss and to whose benefit? (pp. 446–447)

Reflection literacy recognizes that language use involves choices and that although these choices are available in the system of the language, they are made or activated, and received, by people, that is, by socially and culturally situated users. These choices are open to interpretation and need to be interrogated. This reflective literacy has particular significance in languages education in the context of multilingualism and multiculturalism where, in both using and learning languages, students and their teachers are engaged in exchanging meanings across diverse linguistic and cultural systems.

Having discussed globalization and various manifestations of its impact on languages education, I now turn to a consideration of three fundamental concepts: language, culture, and learning, and the ways in which these need to be expanded in this context.

## AN EXPANDED VIEW OF LANGUAGE, CULTURE, AND LEARNING

In the context of the dynamic process of globalization, language learning requires an expanded theoretical understanding of three fundamental concepts in the theory and practice of language teaching and learning: *language*, *culture*, and *learning*. This theoretical expansion provides a foundation for the change both in language teaching and learning in schools and in the professional learning of teachers.

Kramsch (2006, 2009, 2011) has described the change in teaching and learning languages as underscoring the need to teach not only a linguistic code but also meaning and meaning-making. She states that: "Today it is not sufficient for learners to know how to communicate meanings; they have to learn the practice of meaning-making" (Kramsch, 2006, p. 251).

This focus on meaning requires an engagement with the processes of interpreting, negotiating, creating, and exchanging meaning and reflecting on meaning-making. Beyond attending to form and structure, language learning includes considering meanings as subjective and intersubjective, growing out of language but also from the life–worlds, experiences, memories, emotions, and perceptions of the participants in communication (see Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013, for a detailed discussion). In both the act of communicating and the act of learning languages, teachers and learners focus on the description, analysis, and reciprocal interpretation of shared phenomena, as well as an active engagement in interpreting self (intraculturally) and others (interculturally) in diverse contexts of social exchange, real and/or enacted in the classroom (see Papademetre, 2008).

FIGURE 1
An Expanded Conception of Language, Culture, and Learning

**View of language**

| Language as word; structural, grammatical system; code | ←→ | Language as social practice involving diverse contexts of use | ←→ | Elaborate social practice to highlight not just the act or the practice itself, but people and their meaning-making. |
| | | Participants in a practice | ←→ | Elaborate participation as the reciprocal process of interpreting the language and culture, the person and the self, and of reflecting on the process of meaning-making, self and other. |

**View of culture**

| Culture as facts, artefacts, information | ←→ | Culture as social practices; ways of doing things in diverse cultures | ←→ | Elaborate to highlight not only diverse practices, but cultural practices as a lens through which people mutually interpret, create, and exchange meaning and reflecting on the cultural situatedness of self and other. |

**View of learning**

| Acquisition of new knowledge | ←→ | Participation in use of knowledge/knowing how to use language | ←→ | Elaborate to highlight how learning as a process of making sense or coming to understand, involves becoming aware of how learners reciprocally interpret knowledge to others and themselves through their language and culture, and its use with others, and reflect upon the process of learning. |

Figure 1 provides, in summary form, a representation of an expanded conception of language, culture, and learning for the purposes of language teaching and learning. Traditional emphases are not replaced, but extended. In all cases, the expansion extends beyond a focus on the use of language to foreground an interpretive dimension and a focus on the learner as user and learner of language, as a reflective interactant in using and learning language, and as person.

## An Expanded View of Language

The structural view of language as a grammatical system or code needs to be expanded to a concept of language as a social practice, where emphasis is on participants in interaction in diverse situational contexts and in diverse cultural contexts that shape the communication that takes place (see Firth & Wagner, 1997). Some communicative approaches have tended to trivialize the act of communication, reducing it to transactional communication in the target language, separated from social, cultural, and historical contexts (Leung, 2005) and focusing on the production of words and texts that often marginalize the learner as meaning-maker. An expanded view of language as a social, cultural, and historical practice addresses these limitations.

The social practice conception of language needs to be further expanded to include an emphasis on people and their participation in reciprocal processes of interpretation and the creation of meaning, especially in the context of diversity. These processes necessarily involve the analysis of language as a dynamic system and the way it works in the exchange of meaning. They also involve reflection on the exchange and the diverse perspectives, positions, and representations that participants assume and offer. These interpretive dimensions of language resonate with Gadamer's (1976) view of language in philosophical hermeneutics as a fundamentally social, cultural, and historical phenomenon and constitutive of our diverse worlds. He sees the accomplishment of understanding among people in communication as a process of dialogue involving a "fusion of horizons" (2004, p. 370) across diverse perspectives that are constructed and mediated through language. A reflective understanding of language and its use emphasizes that language and meanings cannot be understood as separate from the people as users of language. I return to this conception of under-

standing language in the discussion of teacher learning below.

## An Expanded View of Culture

The view of culture as being bounded by national borders and represented in facts, artefacts, and information needs also to be expanded and conceptualized as societal norms and practices created by individuals, particularly through their use of language (Hymes, 1974). The expansion requires not only a consideration of diverse practices but also understanding culture as a lens through which people mutually and reciprocally interpret and communicate meaning. Clifford Geertz (2000) describes it as involving "learning how, as a being from elsewhere with a world of one's own, to live with them" (p. 16). In language learning, interpreting and creating meanings involves an intercultural act of decentering as learners examine phenomena and experience their own cultural situatedness while seeking to enter into the cultural worlds of others. It requires an act of engagement in which learners compare their own cultural assumptions, expectations, practices, and meanings with those of others, recognizing that these are formed within a cultural context that is different from their own. The learner is not simply situated in one culture and observing another; the learner is an intercultural participant, interpreter, and mediator.

What follows is an illustration of the complex nature of implementing such an expansion of the fundamental concepts of language and culture in the languages classroom, through a case study of collaboration between two people: one an in-service primary teacher of Chinese seeking to improve the Chinese teaching and learning in her classroom; the other a tertiary teacher and researcher investigating the development of teachers' capability to interpret their own teaching, learning, and assessment practices and their students' learning.

The case study involved a Year 5 program for second language learners of Chinese. The school's desire and challenge was to incorporate the inquiry-based approaches of the Primary Years Program (PYP) of the International Baccalaureate. The teacher was a native speaker of Chinese and the learners were boys from Australian–English backgrounds. The study was part of a two-year project designed to examine and improve the teacher's practice. The teacher had taught in Australia for ten years, but found it difficult to mesh her conception of the teaching of Chinese

with the PYP. From the outset in the collaboration, it was acknowledged that contexts of teaching and learning are not fixed or given but, rather, they are created by participants in the course of interaction. It is this aspect that makes change through professional learning particularly difficult.

The process involved cycles of joint investigation, experimentation, facilitation, discussion, development, and, ultimately, change. The process of *lesson study* was used as a vehicle for eliciting teacher conceptions and practices (see Fernandez, Cannon, & Chokshi, 2003; Tsui & Law, 2007). It also incorporated joint planning, ongoing discussion, critical analysis, and feedback, examining the practices of other teachers to allow for the consideration of alternatives and, importantly, discussion with students. In fact, it was the feedback from students that became a major catalyst for change in this teacher's practices. Discussions and analysis included consideration of classroom interaction data recorded over time, document analysis of local policies and programs, debriefing interviews, and ongoing and final reflection.

In reflection, the teacher acknowledges that her own linguistic and cultural life–world influences her professional conceptions and practices. Her primary socialisation into the education system of China and her subsequent socialisation into the Australian educational system contribute to her positioning in the school and in the Chinese classroom, her experience of teaching and learning, and her professional expectations. At the final debriefing interview with the researcher, the Chinese teacher responds to the question, "What did you learn from this project?" as follows:

> First thing, as a native speaker, I was never aware of how to draw on English knowledge to transfer into Chinese concepts. That's the first thing I need to work out, to improve on. Because in the past, I always think that this is the way we do Chinese; learn it! I never thought I should start from the students' English background knowledge and draw on to the new concepts.

The new concepts challenged the teacher's teacher-centred and form/structure-driven conception of language, which operated without consideration of the learners' own linguistic and cultural knowledge or life–worlds, and without the possibility of comparison and bridging across English and Chinese. The teacher realises that there is a need in practice for:

> frequent questioning to engage students (. . .). Because sometimes I feel I didn't ask so many questions to the students, and I didn't ask too many questions to make sure they really understand or engage them (. . .) and every person, individual student has a chance to say (. . .) and also at the end of the lesson I ask them to reflect what they have learnt. I always like trying to finish the lesson and rush into the next class. I never get the chance just to see what they have learnt. So I think this is important to me.

In retrospect, through her own self-reflection, she realizes the need for questioning, to probe the pre-conceptions and developing understanding of her students as individuals.

### *An Expanded View of Learning*

Learning also needs to be expanded beyond it being a matter of individual cognition through which learners, prompted by input, gradually acquire the language (Sfard's [1998] acquisition metaphor). Since the mid-1990s, within sociocultural orientations, language learning has come to be understood as action in context; it involves becoming a member of the language community and extending participation within communities of language users (Sfard's [1998] participation metaphor). Accepting Sfard's two metaphors and acknowledging her emphasis on the need for both invites a further expansion (for a detailed discussion of the insufficiency of only two metaphors, see Larsen–Freeman, 2010; Larsen–Freeman & Cameron, 2008; Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013). This expansion is captured by Halliday (1993) who characterises language learning as "learning how to mean" (p. 93). Further, as Kramsch (2009) makes clear, interaction in learning is not simply the interaction of one person with another, but of one whole history of experiences and memories interacting with another history of experiences and memories. These histories of experiences and memories constitute the foundation upon which new learning is interpreted and constructed.

For the teacher of Chinese in the case study described above, this is a major challenge. On reflection, she realises that her learners were not given many opportunities to examine, engage, and participate in the interpretation and the making of meaning; to experience, through inquiry, how their own linguistic and cultural worlds compared with that of others; or to deepen their understanding of what was being learned through self-reflection:

> I become more aware of this, putting myself into learner's process of thinking. I wasn't really aware of that in the past (. . .). And keep thinking about how I put myself into children's thinking process when I introduce language. And keep asking questions [to students] to ensure full understanding and engagement. And also the other thing in inquiry-based learning is to get students involved in the learning process, rather than just the teacher's talk.

Learners are interpreters working toward achieving understanding in dialogue with fellow participants who are also seeking to understand the particular subject matter.

For each participant in the act of learning how to communicate interlinguistically and interculturally, there is already in place a linguistic and cultural situatedness of one's own determined by one's own conceptual horizon. In hermeneutics, the concepts of *own situation* and *own horizon* are interdependent:

> Essential to the concept of situation is the concept of "horizon." The horizon is the range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point. Applying this to the thinking mind, we speak of narrowness of horizon, of the possible expansion of horizon, of the opening up of new horizons. (Gadamer, 2004, p. 302)

Consequently, learning needs to be understood as a human activity focused on the reciprocal interpreting, creating, and exchanging of meaning, and reflection on the act. The teacher and each learner are co-interpreters working toward achieving mutual understanding of the particular subject matter through a fusion of their individual horizons, since "understanding is always the fusion of these horizons supposedly existing by themselves" (Gadamer, 2004, p. 306).

Being bound by her own horizon, the teacher of Chinese recognized that she did not encourage inquiry and reciprocation toward achieving some degree of "fusion of horizons" (Gadamer, 2004, p. 306) in her program of learning. The learners' histories of experiences and memories, their horizons, and the linguistic and sociocultural preconceptions ("fore-understandings," Gadamer, 2004, pp. 265–266) of each participant in the communicative act were not used to contribute to "opening up of new horizons" (p. 313) It is only through her participation in professional dialogue that she becomes aware of her own situatedness and her own conceptual horizon.

An expanded view of learning needs to involve a process of making sense of each other's contributions and of each other at one and the same time. It is interpretive and reflective work that generates learning (Gallagher, 1992). As learners interpret and construct their world and their identities in relation to others, the interpretive and reflective dimensions bring into play processes of decentering, contextualizing, comparing, contrasting, interpreting, exchanging, translating, mediating, drawing connections, explaining, problematizing, and analyzing. It is these processes that begin to develop Hasan's (2003) "reflection literacy" (p. 446) and the "symbolic competence" proposed by Kramsch and Whiteside (2008, pp. 664–668). It entails using language to negotiate and exchange meanings reciprocally with others as well as to reflect on the nature of the exchange and the linguistic and cultural construction of meanings. These expansions provide an intellectual framework for understanding the nature and scope of the change in language teaching and learning that language teachers need to embrace and that needs to be captured in teacher professional learning.

For the teacher of Chinese, learning to teach interlinguistically and interculturally, in the sense of working with and between (at least) two languages and cultures, would mean being attentive to such aspects as how her students interpret her talk and texts, how they figure things out, how they experiment with and use the Chinese language, how they respond and react to discussions about linguistic and cultural concepts. She would probe their preconceptions and facilitate their making connections and comparisons between their understanding, drawn from their prior experience, and the new understanding that she is seeking to co-construct with her students. She would invite consideration of the perspectives offered by diverse class members and the noticing of similarities and differences among perspectives. Ultimately, she would facilitate discussion about how their engagement with responses of others provides them with ways of understanding life–worlds in Chinese and other languages and cultures available in the classroom and the school community.

## RECONCEPTUALIZING LANGUAGE CURRICULA, TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

### The Challenges

The expanded view of the fundamental concepts calls for a reconceptualization of languages

education, including the development of curricula, as well as reconsidering teaching, learning, and assessment practices. This is a particularly difficult challenge because language policies in English-speaking countries have become more restrictive, and it is complex because languages education sits within an educational policy and curriculum setting that is structured within a monolingual view of education and learning (see Clyne, 2005; Scarino, 2008, for a discussion of this phenomenon in the Australian context). Such a challenge requires developing ways of interrogating the assumptions about the nature and scope of language learning that are deeply embedded in mainstream curricula, teaching, learning, and assessment practices.

Teachers of languages in K–12 contexts are generally required to work with overarching generic frameworks, such as the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages's (2012) *ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines* or the Council of Europe's (2001) *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*, which are not sensitive to the diversity of languages, learner backgrounds, and conditions of learning. These frameworks, with specifications of content and achievement standards, elide the aspects of the co-construction of learning that come from the participants themselves. They do not capture the interlinguistic and intercultural work of reciprocal interpretation and exchange of meaning as a distinguishing characteristic of language learning. Equally, they do not capture the important role of reflection.

*Implications for the Role of Teachers as Mediators*

The expansion in conceptual understandings of language, culture, and learning has implications for the role of teachers. In the context of globalization, teachers, like their students, bring their distinctive life–worlds to the teaching of languages. For example, for the teacher of Chinese, the language being taught is the language of her primary socialization; for others, it is a learnt language. For some, it is one of many; for others, it is a language in addition to their own. Some have been educated in Australia; others have been educated in the countries of their birth outside of Australia. In addition to working with their own distinctive linguistic and cultural make-ups, language teachers also work as individuals or members of distinctive communities with their own local, educational, and institutional cultures. They necessarily enact their teaching and learning through their own interpretive framework of

knowledge, understanding, practices, and values built over time, and based on their diverse experiences. The conceptual expansions described above have complexified the professional repertoire of teachers, who naturally will navigate the diversity of their language learning classroom in different ways as they mediate language learning.

Understanding language learning as interlinguistic and intercultural alters the teacher–student relationship. Teachers need to work with multiple languages in the classroom; they need to work both systematically and flexibly; they need to work with diverse learner perspectives, choices, and positions. In short, they need to be able to interpret their students' and their own teaching and learning practices in the context of diversity. Kramsch (2004) describes the language teacher as mediating various identities, discourses, and worldviews. She explains:

> If we define the language teacher as the quintessential go-between among people with various languages, and of different cultures, generations, and genders, then it might be appropriate to think of the language teacher as a cross-cultural mediator, someone who has acquired the ability to interact with "others" be they native or non-native speakers, present or past writers; someone who has learned to accept other perspectives and perceptions of the world, to mediate between different perspectives and to be conscious of their evaluation of difference. (p. 44)

Teachers have a central role. Their choices shape the curricula, programs, and learning experiences that they create and the texts and resources they incorporate. They are the ones who mediate the kinds of action and reflection indicated above. They need to: (a) understand and ensure that they work with the students' holistic, linguistic, and cultural repertoires to provide opportunities to elaborate and extend them; (b) understand that the process of learning, like communication, has personal, processual, and reflective dimensions, which are interpretive; (c) develop students' metacognition, their capability to think about thinking; and (d) facilitate interactivity that develops both intercultural sensitivity and self-reflection.

As illustrated in the article's case study, my ongoing experience of working collaboratively with teachers in a number of research and professional learning projects, where teachers were invited to experiment with these expanded ideas, indicates that this is a major challenge. The lessons to be learned for the education of both

pre- and in-service language teachers are: (a) in the context of diversity, the very nature of learning languages needs to be reconceptualized as interlinguistic and intercultural; (b) this reconceptualization necessitates a change in curricula, teaching, learning, and assessment practices; and (c) teacher education can help participants to gain a deep understanding of the interpretive and reflective nature of language learning that leads to a self-awareness of themselves as participants in reciprocal interpretation of meaning-making with their learners.

## Perspectives on Language Teacher Education: The Knowledge Base Debate

For language teachers working within an interlinguistic and intercultural perspective, teacher education has a dual goal. On the one hand there is the goal of developing teacher understanding of language, culture, and learning in their most contemporary representation to transform their practices for the benefit of student language learning. On the other hand, there is the goal of developing teachers' meta/self-awareness of their role and practices. This means examining critically the nature of the diverse theories of language learning, as well as their own conceptions. It involves coming to understand the intricate, interpretive nature of teaching, learning, and assessment. The transformation of teachers' practices necessitates that they explore their own understandings, and beliefs.

Rather than focus on the history of language teacher education (for reviews, see Borg, 2003; Freeman, 2002; Mann, 2005), I shall address a debate in the field of teacher education about the nature of the knowledge base for teacher education (see Freeman & Johnson, 1998, 2005; Tarone & Allwright, 2005; Yates & Muchinsky, 2003). The debate focuses on differences in views about the extent to which the traditional disciplines such as psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics, and second language acquisition, rather than the act of teaching in context, should form the knowledge base for language teacher education. Underlying this difference in views is the perspective on the nature of knowledge held by participants in the debate: On the one hand, within the positivist perspective, knowledge is seen as objective and uninfluenced by the knower; on the other hand, within the interpretive perspective, knowledge is focused on understanding the meanings held by people in what they say and do, and situating meanings within the historical, cultural, institu-

tional, and immediate situational contexts that shape them (Geertz, 2000; Moss et al., 2009).

In the lead article of the special issue of the *TESOL Quarterly* on English language teacher education, Freeman and Johnson (1998) argue for a reconceptualization of the knowledge base for TESOL teacher education; that is, what it is that teachers need to know. The shift that they propose is from a focus on decontextualized bodies of knowledge to knowledge that is contextualized in teachers' contexts of practice. They argue that English language teacher education "must begin with the activity of language teaching and learning; the school and classroom contexts in which it is practised; and the experience, knowledge, and beliefs of the teacher as participant" (p. 413).

In proposing this shift, Freeman and Johnson draw upon sociocultural perspectives on learning and on a view of teacher cognition that takes into account teacher beliefs and tacit understandings (Borg, 2006; Woods, 1996). They summarize their view as follows:

> We believe that teachers must understand their own beliefs and knowledge about learning and teaching and be thoroughly aware of the certain impact of such knowledge and beliefs on their classrooms and the language learners in them. We believe that teachers must be fully aware of and develop a questioning stance toward the complex social, cultural and institutional structures that pervade the professional landscapes where they work (. . .). This drive to understand oneself and the impact of one's work on others lies at the core of the activity of teaching. (Freeman & Johnson, 1998, p. 412)

Freeman and Johnson's assignment of secondary status to discipline-based knowledge has been contested (see Tarone & Allwright, 2005; Freeman & Johnson's response to Tarone & Allwright in Freeman & Johnson, 2005; Yates & Muchinsky, 2003). At the core of this debate is the question of the sufficiency of theoretical knowledge and its role in the work of teachers.

Kramsch (2004) makes the distinction in a slightly different way, proposing a set of six "knowledges," (p. 45) rather than the notion of a knowledge base for teachers teaching languages within an intercultural orientation. This formulation permits different facets or ways of knowing, thereby extending the notion of theoretical knowledge. She draws upon Byram and Zarate's (1994) *savoirs* to formulate six knowledges, which she describes as follows: (a) a body of theoretical knowledge or *savoir*; (b) a linguistic, interactional

competence or *savoir dire/faire*; (c) an interpretive and relational competence or *savoir comprendre*; (d) a methodological competence or *savoir enseigner*; (e) intercultural attitudes and beliefs or *savoir être*; and (f) a critical cultural stance or *savoir s'engager*. This set of knowledges usefully brings together conceptual knowledge ("a") as well as procedural ("b–d") and metacognitive knowledge ("e" and "f").

In teacher education, a further qualification is needed for the notion of knowledge for teaching and learning. This is captured in general education in Shulman's (1987) concept of *pedagogical content knowledge*, which refers to a distinctive form of knowledge that renders teachable the knowledge of a particular discipline. This conception acknowledges teachers' "personal practical knowledge" (Golombeck, 1998, p. 447) and opens the way for a range of formulations that recognize that theoretical knowledge and practice are mutually informing (see also Woods, 1996, for his formulation of beliefs, assumptions, and knowledge [BAK]). More recently, Ball, Thames, and Phelps (2008) have further elaborated the concept of pedagogical content knowledge to include two interrelated sets of knowledge: (a) knowledge of content and teaching and (b) knowledge of content and students. Thus, pedagogical content knowledge now includes a combination of discipline knowledge that is (a) rendered appropriate for teaching, and (b) rendered appropriate to the knowledge of particular students. Applied to language teacher education, this concept acknowledges the need to blend the interrelated domains of knowledge for the purposes of teaching with the life–worlds of teachers and the life–worlds of their students. This formulation represents a contextualized and interpretive view of teacher learning, a process that parallels the interlinguistic and intercultural perspective on language learning as described above. This distinctive form of teacher knowledge becomes a part of the interpretive framework, an amalgam of knowledge, beliefs, and values that they draw upon in teaching and learning (Scarino, 2013).

The scope of knowledge is dynamic and expansive and, as such, is challenging. Its process of development also constitutes a major challenge because it requires engaging with teachers' preconceptions and their frameworks of knowledge, understandings, values, and practices. In the section that follows I will again illustrate the challenges by discussing another case study from my collaborative research on language teacher professional learning, conducted through the Research Centre for Languages and Cultures, at

the University of South Australia. This case study foregrounds instances in which the teacher's preconceptions, framework of knowledge, and horizon influence his practice and challenge his mediating stance.

### Case Study: Year 10/11 French Unit of Work on Multiculturalism

This case study comes from a three-year study involving ten teachers of diverse languages at K–12 levels, investigating aspects of teaching languages within an interlinguistic and intercultural perspective. The process involved iterative cycles of discussion, design of learning experiences, experimentation, individual reflection, and further group analysis, debriefing, and discussion. The discussions were used as a catalyst for exploring the participants' understandings. Data were gathered in relation to the teachers' programs, students' work, teacher and student reflection, and ongoing collaborative analysis and discussions between teachers and researchers.[2]

The context of this example is the work of one of the participating teachers working with a Year 10/11 class (the two years prior to the final year of the secondary cycle of education in Australia). The French class comprised twenty-seven students which, in addition to local Australian students, included six boys and two girls from various nations in Africa, one boy and three girls from Germany on an exchange program, a boy from Laos, and four local adult education students.

The unit of work discussed here explored the diverse and multicultural nature of French society and the difficulties experienced by communities of people with African origins living in contemporary France. The main focus for learning and discussion was based on a range of contemporary texts selected by the teacher, as he states, "on the theme of immigration, racism, the wearing of the head scarf versus *laïcité* in France." The teacher describes his goals as (a) exploring students' responses to "challenging multicultural situations with an awareness of their own cultural positioning and, at the same time, (b) examining students' ability to express themselves articulately in French on the themes of immigration and multiculturalism."

Additional information and resources, such as statistical data, were used to stimulate discussion and reflection. Figure 2 shows the text by a student from one of the countries of Africa, a response to the culminating task in which students were asked to write a personal analysis of one of the photographs in their resources. The

FIGURE 2
Student Response to a Photograph

La deuxième photo ce semble être une protestation paisible des filles musulmanes. Elles ont mis le tricolore sur leurs foulards. En fait ça, peut-être elles veulent montrer qu'elles peuvent être musulmane et française au même temps; que, être l'une, ça ne doit pas les exclure d'être l'autre. Pour les gens qui ne supportent pas les foulards ou les autres signes religieux, ils verraient les tchadors avec le bleu, blanc et rouge comme incompatibles avec le principe de la laïcité (ou neutralité) en France. À mon avis, c'est un témoignage intelligent que les filles ont fait parce que c'est profond et pas violent. En utilisant leurs intelligences au lieu de violence (en serrant constructive au lieu de destructrice), je pense que les filles montrent qu'elles ont pensé longue et forte au sujet de quoi elles croient. Je crois que c'est admirable d'agir dans cette façon parce que c'est plus difficile se conduire calmement et logiquement à propos de qu'on semble passionnément qu'il est se conduire rapidement et sans pensée. À mon avis, de quoi j'ai vu tout autour le monde (particulièrement dans le Moyen-Orient), en agissant dans une manière violente, le seulement résultat est plus violence. Cette n'aide à rien.

[See author's translation in Appendix]

photograph to which the student responds depicts three Muslim girls wearing the French flag on top of their head scarves.

The text demonstrates the nature of the student's reflection on the photograph related to the theme. Its expression cannot be separated from the young person's stance. The student conveys her opinion but does not continue to a stage of reflecting on her own stance, that is, why she thinks as she does.

In the debriefing session with the researcher, the teacher tries to articulate his surprise at the students' responses to the unit's theme. His expectations, in turn, are based on his preconceptions and his personal vantage point or horizon:

> For me personally, the responses that I got from the variety of students who I have in the class, you know, from the African boy saying to . . . to this Nigerian girl in France: "You must obey your father. You must follow your traditions, that's just the way it is." You know, without them also saying: Well, perhaps that's the sort of way I was brought up . . . . Couldn't get it out of them. So I really found overall, that the next bit was the hardest for students to get to. Even though the students were very articulate. . . but no one ever says: "You know, I think this way because culturally that is how I was brought up."

His retrospective reflection indicates a desire to get his students to make the connection between

how their own enculturation gives expression to their own ideas, values, and beliefs, as his own enculturation and framework of knowledge does for shaping his horizon. But the fusion of horizons he endeavours to achieve through his mediation did not happen, and that experience challenges his presuppositions and situatedness as a teacher. He continues:

> There were a few, only a very few who. . . were able to be conscious of the fact that they were supposed to be looking beyond comparison, because it's not a natural reflex. You can express an opinion; knowing and then stepping back from that, that's the hard bit.

The notion of "looking beyond comparison" is understood by the teacher as something more than considering the similarities and differences between two items. In fact, it signals that the complex process of decentring from one's own perspective and reflecting to a point of meta-analysis is a desired goal, but one which the teacher did not feel he had succeeded in mediating with his students. The teacher expected that this unit of work would have afforded students the opportunity to move back and forth in examining and reflecting on their opinions and the perspectives of others, contributing their vantage points to a collective examination of cultural conditioning and the construction of personal frameworks of knowledge. But were his

expectations based on having taught his students how to critically analyse that knowledge? How to navigate such back and forth movement? And having them thus prepared, how to enact it in class? He chose the theme for the unit, selected the materials, created questions to stimulate group discussion, designed tasks that allowed students to present their own perspectives, but he did not model with students the complex process of decentring, interpreting, and reflecting on the experience. His work in this unit captured students' description and observations on multiculturalism. What was not captured systematically was an understanding of the role of language and culture in exchanging meaning and the integration into communication of an understanding of the self (and others) as already situated in one's own language and culture when communicating with others. As a teacher, he reflected on the diverse perspectives, values, and beliefs that emerged from his linguistically and culturally diverse learner group but he did not invite shared analysis among students of these diverse responses as a process that would have provoked reflection on their own linguistic and cultural situatedness and the same for others. Nor did his reflection extend to a consideration of his own personal and professional enculturation, for example, why he had made the choices he had made in developing and facilitating the unit, what it was in his memories and experiences that led him to design the unit in the way he did. He was able to articulate a rationale for each of his decisions about the selection of tasks and materials but remained uncertain about his own ways of facilitating the class discussions because of an overarching desire not to "tell the students what to think" and a sensitivity about how much personal disclosure he should allow himself to engage in.

In professional learning for language teachers in diverse contexts of education, it becomes necessary to focus on how to develop an understanding of the fact that teachers and students, equally and both, bring their own interpretive resources to their learning: how they both see the subject, the language and culture being learnt, the processes of learning, and their roles as reflective interactants. Together, they live the experience of language learning. As experts, teachers have a distinctive role in connecting, that is, in building the fabric of the target language and culture and the lived culture of learning that is being created continuously with students within and beyond the classroom. It is the teachers who invite the noticing, the compar-

ing, and the making of interexperiential and intertextual connections, and prompt reflection on the nature of language, culture, communication, and learning in diversity. Teachers' interactive questioning is a powerful means for building these connections and inviting questioning, problematizing, and enquiry. They continuously interrelate students' variable intraculturality in its diverse aspects, bringing each learner to recognize that diversity may have unexpected elements; that his or her way of experiencing, seeing, interpreting, and understanding is understood interactively with reciprocal reference to others, respecting differences of opinion and building upon respect for one another. Teachers draw upon learners' emotions, not just their cognition. They listen actively to learners and ask them to listen carefully and attend to the interpretations and meanings of other contributors. Together, they draw connections over time and across contexts, texts, and experiences. Teachers remind them constantly of the need to check each other's meanings as part of the continuing dialogue of learning. They embody respect and enact it through their practice. At the same time, teachers are fellow inquirers who need to model the complex processes of decentring and connecting for and with their students. This requires that they be prepared to disclose of themselves as much as they expect their students to disclose of themselves.

This is the challenge of language teaching and learning and teacher education within an interlinguistic and intercultural perspective. Mediating language and culture learning should not be simply teaching the curriculum and assessing its goals and objectives. The challenge remains: How can we, individually and collectively, develop ways of working and modelling such mediation, being mindful of the influence of diverse personal and professional enculturation, and its slippery horizons?

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The case studies presented above illustrate moments in the trajectory of the teachers' reflections on their practices in studies that continued over a two-year period (Case Study Chinese) and a three-year period (Case Study French). In both studies, my focus as a researcher working with teachers was on inviting them to reflect on their own practices and conceptions in relation to teaching languages within an interlinguistic and intercultural perspective. The cycles of debriefing throughout the process invited the

teacher–participants to: (a) report upon, articulate, and explain their own work; (b) return to an exploration of the fundamental concepts; (c) draw connections across episodes in the cycle of experiences in the study and across the diverse responses of the participants; (d) reflect continuously on their teaching, their students' learning, and their own learning; and (e) draw together and interpret reciprocally their evolving knowledge, experience, memories, understanding, judgments, and preconceptions. In this way, the teachers were positioned as language users and mediators of languages and cultures, as learners and as individuals with their distinctive life–worlds, working in their distinctive contexts, with diverse learners.

The process of research and learning on the part of teachers in these studies cannot be described as one of simply identifying and applying theoretical knowledge even though several interrelated domains of knowledge were drawn upon. Nor can it be described as a process of drawing on "best" practice, based on the flawed assumption that there exists a best way of achieving particular goals and that these can be pre-specified and made available to others (see Edge & Richards, 1998). Rather, the process involved an integration of theoretical knowledge, participants' personal and contextualized knowledge, experience, and understanding, and ongoing processes of participation, discussion, and analysis. As learners themselves, the teacher–participants were analyzers (at least in an initial way) of their experience as performers, self-reflecting on the preconceptions that they bring into their practice.

For teachers, who teach languages in the context of diversity, the challenge is a conceptual one. The shift toward an interlinguistic and intercultural orientation to language teaching and learning that does justice to the contemporary nature of multilinguality in our globalized world calls for a reconceptualization of the basic concepts of language, culture, and learning, to include a reciprocal, interpretive dimension. This dimension allows space for continuously exploring meanings as they are being formed, rather than seeing them as fixed.

Related to the conceptual challenge for language teachers is a processual one—the challenge of the process of learning and mediating how to understand. Understanding as dialogue involves engagement in a reciprocal process of interpretation and meaning-making, critically examining contributors' preconceptions, the subject matter at hand, and the person. This requires reflection, which is fundamental to the process of learning and has a long history in teacher education. It is important, therefore, to highlight that this form of reflection entails a critical deconstruction and re-working of meanings, of learning in the context of developing interpretive understanding. As Gadamer (1981) explains: "Understanding means a growth in inner awareness which as a new experience enters into the texture of our own mental experience" (p. 109).

In our globalized world, such language teacher professional learning, like student language learning, needs to integrate conceptual knowledge of language, culture, and learning in the context of communication through interaction in diversity; processual knowledge, in the sense of participation in the social practice of reciprocal teaching and learning, and modelling the interpretive and reflective use of language. It needs to recognize the act of learning as interpretive, with participants working together toward understanding each other's meanings and becoming familiar "with the frames of meaning within which they enact their lives" (Geertz, 2000, p. 16). It needs to develop reflectivity and reflexivity, that is, the capability to decentre and to reflect on one's own conceptions and practices in relation to those of others. This is the challenge in teacher professional learning for teachers of languages— a challenge that the teacher of Chinese and the teacher of French had just begun to perceive.

NOTES

[1] The term *languages education* is the term generally used in Australian education to refer to foreign language learning in the K–12 context.
[2] Full details of the study can be made available by the author.

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APPENDIX

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Translation of Student's Text

The second photo seems to be a peaceful protest from Muslim girls. They have put the French flag on top of their head scarves. In fact, perhaps they want to show that they can be Muslim and French at the same time; that, being one does not have to exclude being the other. For those people who do not support the wearing of headscarves or other religious signs, they would see the chadors with the blue, white, and red as incompatible in France. In my opinion, it is an intelligent protest that the girls have made because it is deep and not violent. By using their intelligence rather than violence (by being constructive instead of destructive) I think that the girls show that they have thought long and hard about what they believe. I think that it is admirable to act in this way because it is harder to act calmly and logically about something about which one is passionate than it is to act quickly (spontaneously) and without thought. In my opinion, from what I have seen around the world (especially in the Middle East) in acting in a violent manner, the only result is more violence. That doesn't help at all.