Teachers’ perception of the concept of intercultural competence in teaching English

Anna Israelsson
Teachers’ perception of the concept of intercultural competence in teaching English

Anna Israelsson

Abstract

Intercultural competence (IC) as an essential part of conceptualization of the cultural dimension in FLT has been promoted by educationalists as the most preferred type of competence. One of the challenges of incorporating IC into FLT is to move from the recognition of IC as a model of teaching (Byram, Nichols and Stevens, 2001) to the development of practical applications. This can be due to the fact that teachers do not have sufficient knowledge of the theory behind the concept and consequently, have difficulties to implement the curriculum requirements with regards to IC into their teaching. The purpose of this study was to investigate how teachers of English in upper secondary schools in Sweden interpret the concept of IC and, accordingly, what is their view of culture in English language teaching. In order to answer the research question, I used an exploratory investigation by adopting a qualitative research method in form of semi-structured interviews. The results are similar to the previous studies (Lundgren, 2002; Larzén, 2005) and suggest that teachers lack theoretical background and central guidance with regards to IC and do not always integrate language and culture into an intercultural model of the English language pedagogy.

Keywords

Intercultural competence, culture, English Language Teaching, Byram’s savoirs, teacher cognition.
Contents

1. Introduction .......................................................................................................................... 1
2. Theoretical framework ......................................................................................................... 2
   2.1 The development of objectives in foreign language teaching from linguistic competence to intercultural competence ...................................................... 3
   2.2 Culture in FLT .................................................................................................................. 5
   2.3 Intercultural competence in FLT .................................................................................... 7
       2.3.1 Byram’s model of IC .............................................................................................. 8
3. Methodology ........................................................................................................................... 11
4. Results and Discussion ......................................................................................................... 13
   4.1 Understanding of the concept of intercultural competence ........................................... 13
   4.2 View of culture in ELT .................................................................................................. 18
   4.3 Byram’s savoirs in the teachers’ perception of intercultural competence ................. 23
   4.4 Opportunities and obstacles in macro- and micro-contexts ........................................ 24
4. Conclusion ............................................................................................................................ 26
5. Implementations for teaching ............................................................................................... 27
References .................................................................................................................................. 28
Appendix A ............................................................................................................................... 33
Appendix B ............................................................................................................................... 34
1. Introduction

English language teaching theory and methodology has evolved over the decades and this development includes changes in the type of proficiency learners need as well as emergence of numerous theories of the linguistic nature. Different developments in our society had an impact on language teaching strategies and attitudes towards foreign language learning. As a response to the acknowledgement of social and cultural significance in language teaching, a revolutionary concept of intercultural competence (IC) emerged over the last two decades. Research that have followed the emergence of this conception contributed to the development of a theoretical framework and practical applications for IC. The purpose of developing IC in all fields of education, and particularly in FLT is to increase international and cross-cultural acceptance and tolerance among learners. Teaching IC does not only entail acquainting learners with knowledge about different cultures, but also with a set of practices that necessitate knowledge, skills and attitudes, including critical cultural awareness, which teachers should incorporate in their classroom practice by advocating cultural and linguistic relativity.

The intercultural element in the FLT has become of a great concern not only for linguists or policy makers but also for teachers. Currently, the field of FLT encounters the inevitable process of globalization and technological expansion which is also reflected in the development of foreign language curricula around the world. Naturally, the curriculum for upper secondary schools in Sweden follows the contemporary trend in language teaching methodology and includes the significance of culture and IC in teaching English. It states that:

“Students should be given the opportunity to develop knowledge of living conditions, social issues and cultural features in different contexts and parts of the world where English is used. Teaching should encourage students' curiosity in language and culture, and give them the opportunity to develop pluriligualism where skills in different languages interact and support each other.” (Skolverket, 2012a, p. 1).

Still, the concept of IC is not mentioned, defined or acknowledged in terms of its content and scope in the curriculum. The complementary supplement to the curriculum (Skolverket, 2012b) that introduces intercultural dimension into the aims of language teaching, states very little about how to implement this concept in a classroom practice.
Moreover, the teaching education programs usually limit cultural aspects in FLT to literature studies (Larzén, 2005) and do not provide a guidance for how to understand the concept of IC and what are practical implications of teaching IC with regards to ELT. This ambiguity of conceptualization of IC in the policy documents may entail misinterpretations of the expectations towards foreign language teachers.

Significant studies on FLT with respect to IC can be found particularly through the multi-layered work of Michel Byram and Lies Sercu. As pointed out by Byram, Nichols & Stevens (2001), language teaching has been profoundly influenced by linguistics and there is still lack of good practice and inadequate attention is paid to the intercultural element in teacher education. Correspondingly, as stated by Sercu and Bandura (2005), FLT is, by definition, intercultural; therefore, foreign language teachers face the challenge of promoting the acquisition of IC in their practice.

The importance of developing IC in parallel with communicative competence supported by numerous studies and reflected in the policy documents has caused one of the greatest pedagogical challenges. Also, the question of how the English language teachers perceive language and culture teaching, interculturality, and their role as culture teachers have been posed by a number of researchers (Paige et al., 2003). The purpose of this study is to focus specifically on English teachers’ perception of the concept of IC and on how this perception is reflected in the description of their teaching practice. To answer this question, six English teachers for upper secondary school in Sweden will be interviewed in order to, firstly, investigate their understanding of IC and explore what features of their teaching practice relate to the theoretical framework of IC, and secondly, conclude what are the obstacles and the opportunities for teaching IC in the existing situation based on the teachers’ responses.

2. Theoretical framework

It has been recognized that even a marginal exchange of information between speakers of different languages requires the presence of the people’s identity and culture (Byram, 2009). Thus, during the past few decades we have observed a major change in the character of the objectives in FLT. There has been a shift in importance from linguistic competence through communicative competence to the current emphasis on IC. Previous and present interpretations of IC and various insightful studies (Alptekin, 2002; Byram,
1997; Cetinavei, 2012; Kramsch, 2011; Sercu, 2005; and more) that rationalize them provide many ways of viewing and understanding the topic. Accordingly, it has been determined that IC is presently the vastly preferred type of competence in foreign language teaching and learning after the consecutive dominance of linguistic competence and communicative competence.

In this section I would like to outline the development of intercultural component in FLT from a historical perspective. I will start by illustrating diverse approaches of FLT methods, continue with outlining the relationship between language and culture and finally, provide the rationale for IC in ELT.

2.1 The development of objectives in foreign language teaching from linguistic competence to intercultural competence

The overview of the development of teaching methods and objectives clearly illustrates that teaching language and culture has not always been integrated and pedagogically justified. Over the years, the FLT profession had been determined by emergence of teaching methods that increased and declined in popularity. Practical applications of theoretical findings in the field of ELT include a wide variety of methods such as: The Classical Method, The Grammar Translation Method, The Direct Method, and Audiolingual Method, which regard a language as a system of hierarchically arranged, rule-governed structures (Brown, 2007). In the late 1950’s Noam Chomsky established a number of objectives and language theories that have been applied and developed in language teaching practice. Those objectives highlighted the study of language as a system independent from any particular context (Cetinavci, 2012). In his study Chomsky argues against the sterility of behaviorism and claims that the nature of language and process of language acquisition can only be explained in terms of genetically transmitted language faculty (Pütz, 1992). This rejection of behaviorism in language learning contributed to rejection of the Audiolingual Method and implementation of so called Cognitive Code Learning in ELT (Brown, 2007). In the 1970’s, representing a major change of emphasis, Hymes (1972) presents the concept of Communicative Competence (CC) which arises mainly as a conjunction of two independent developments: that of Chomsky’s transformational generative grammar, on the one hand, and the ethnography of communication, on the other (Hymes, 1992). Hymes objects to Chomsky’s narrow conception of linguistic competence and acknowledges the relations between language
and culture (Pütz, 1992). Hence, the term competence has become central in relation to linguistic change. As Hymes (1992) points out, whenever scholars have called attention to an aspect of linguistic ability other than the narrowly grammatical, they have frequently labelled it a kind of competence, for instance, literary competence, rhetorical competence, narrative competence, or sociolinguistic competence. The concept of CC recognizes that the competence of a person in a language is partly and variably a function of other languages they use as well as their ability to integrate the use of language with other modalities of communication such as politeness or facial expression. In the study of language teaching and learning, CC was used in the sense of ability to engage in spontaneous interaction in a target language.

“People who work in ESL, tend to use CC (…) to include not only the linguistic forms of the language but also its social rules, the knowledge of when, how, and to whom it is appropriate to use these forms …” (Paulston, 1979:1 in Hymes, 1992:34).

In other words, teachers understood that it was insufficient to teach students to only produce grammatically correct phrases, they also needed to use these phrases in actual communicative situations.

The concept of CC has continued to evolve and the tendency to go beyond any simple distinction between language grammar and language use has increased. Rather than either grammar or communication opposition, language started to be seen as a social semiotics (Halliday, 1992). In 1986 van Ek in his work for the Council of Europe includes CC in FLT by presenting a systematic guideline of foreign language learning objectives and developing six abilities: linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence, discursive competence, strategic competence, social competence, sociocultural competence. He provides a model together with a discussion of the nature and educational implications of each of its components. As Dörnyei, Celce-Murcia and Thurrell (1995) point out, communicative language teaching (CLT) should be based implicitly or explicitly on some model of CC and throughout the years, various scholars and linguists (e.g., Harmer 2001; Nunan, 2003) have developed a detailed content specification for Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) which is, as pointed out by Brown (2007), commonly accepted approach in the field.
2.2 Culture in FLT

Different ways of defining culture and its relation to language have been reflected in different theories and approaches in FLT. As pointed out by Larzén (2005), the relationship between language and culture is extremely complex. “This is due to the fact that on the one hand language is an integral part of culture, but on the other hand it is an expression of culture.” (p. 27). Lustig (2003) accords with this observation by saying: “Culture is a learned set of shared interpretations about beliefs, values, and norms, which affect the behaviors of a relatively large group of people.” (p. 27). In his opinion those shared interpretations establish the very important link between communication and culture. Over decades, academics of the field of FLT have tried to formulate definitions of culture, and very often the definitions have varied significantly. Nonetheless, as the term culture may seem very vague and diverse in its meaning, many researchers often categorize it as Capital-C culture – art, music, monuments, literary works, and Small-c culture – products of everyday life. As Kramsch (1993) points out, a traditional thought in FLT has limited the teaching of culture to the transmission of information about the target language’s Capital-C culture and Small-c culture. Kramsch contributed to the discussion about teaching language along the cultural fault line by recognizing that culture in language learning is not an extendable fifth skill, tacked on to the teaching of speaking, listening, reading and writing. She argues that culture is always in the background right from the day one, “making evident the limitations of their hard-won communicative skills and challenging their ability to make sense of the world around them.” (p. 1). Kramsch proposed reversing the traditional view of language teaching as the teaching of forms to express universal meanings. Instead, particular meanings, contextual differences and learner variability is the point of departure in her study. Byram, Morgan and colleagues (1994) in their study claim that we cannot be teachers of language without being teachers of culture and vice versa. They further develop on Kramsch’s views on culture in FLT as a social construct which is the product of self and other perspective. Byram points out that a learner cannot simply shake of their own culture and step into another; the educational purpose of FLT begins by understanding yourself, and then learning to understand others.

As knowledge of culture provides a crucial base of knowledge of a language, it is very often rooted in a national conception of culture and language. This has been very problematic given that English is now used as a global lingua franca and has no specific
geographical boundaries (Baker, 2011). There are many studies that criticize teaching English with a most exclusive focus on native varieties and their cultures. Decke-Cornill (2003) and Mauranen and Ranta (2009) point out that English should be taught as a *lingua franca*, where there is a break of a traditional assumption that language associated with one or more specific cultures. However, as Decke-Cornill’s (2002) study suggest, many teachers, especially those with strong academic qualifications rely heavily on an emphasis on specific countries and cultures. Correspondingly, Tornberg (2000) points out that despite a requisite to give culture dimension in FLT a heavier emphasis, the concept of culture is not being reviewed. This results in culture being associated mostly with nationality in foreign language curricula.

Culture, however, irrespective of its affiliation has also an aspect of fluidity. Tornberg (2000), has developed three different analytical perspectives on communication and culture: culture as a *fact fulfilled* – it implies a conception of culture as nationally defined; a *future competence* – expresses that there is an individual behavioral skill to be developed; and third, culture as an *encounter in an open landscape*. While the first two recognize culture in foreign language teaching and learning as a product, the third one, based on Kramsch (1993) concept of a *third place* sees culture as a process that emphasizes the student’s influential role, self-analysis, and responsibility for participation in the real-time experience (Lundgren, 2002). A comparable opinion is provided by Crozet, Liddicoat and Lo Bianco (1999)

“(…) an intercultural interaction is neither a question of maintaining one's own cultural frame nor of assimilating to one's interactant's cultural frame. It is rather a question of finding an intermediary place between these two positions of adopting a third place. In so doing the participant in the interaction is an experiencer, not an observer of difference. The ability to find this third place is at the core of intercultural competence.” (p.15).

As Godley (2012) points out, until recently, educational researchers have tended to view culture as a system of meanings and practices that remain constant and that individuals learn from the groups with which they identify. Nowadays scholars tend to view culture as shifting over time (Abdallah-Pretceille, 2006). In that respect it is not referring just to the practices that students bring to school, but also something that is revised and created thought interactions between people in schools.” (Godley, 2012, p. 457). In this sense
schools and classrooms are social spaces in which intercultural communication gives rise to new cultures and communication patterns.

The reason for providing this fairly short description of the development of language and culture in FLT was to present a background in which the discussion about language teaching today can be grounded. Clearly, as presented above, there was little or no interest in cultural aspects in teaching before the 1970’s when the communicative language teaching paradigm occurred; however, the cultural aspect in language learning over time developed into a significant part of language teaching methodologies leading to different implications for language teaching objectives. As various research (e.g. Gagnestam, 2003; Larzén, 2005; Lundgren, 2005) indicates that many language teachers in Swedish upper secondary schools feel unsure about how to deal with culture in FLT, these perspectives are used as a point of reference in a subsequent research on teachers’ perception on culture and IC in teaching English.

2.3 Intercultural competence in FLT

IC as a conception has been developed in many fields, such as: human resources, business, social work, engineering or health (Deardorff, 2009). Accordingly, there are different models and excellent analyses of IC designed for particular contexts. Needless to say, it has become well-developed in FLT as the guiding model for the overall objective of FL education.

A growing number of scholars have expressed the need of examining the concept of IC in teaching English. The topic appears frequently but is conceptualised and implemented differently in different studies. There are many publications (e.g. Cetinavci, 2012; Alptekin, 2002) that recognize the importance of IC and that this competence in form of knowledge, skill and attitudes is a highly favoured type of competence in ELT. Cetinavci (2012) points out that a number of studies that focus on IC in ELT are not clear about how they differ from the tents of its predecessor that is CC, and about whose culture is to be taught along with the language. Indeed, as Alptekin (2002) says, the CC model draws on sociocultural situations with a very solid perception of the native English speaker’s culture. He claims that culture in language teaching and learning is usually defined practically as the culture of the language being learned. With reference to these reflections, Alptekin argues that English should be taught as a lingua franca and proposes
a paradigm shift that highlights IC. This incorporates local and international contexts and involve native-nonnative and nonnative-nonnative discourse participants. As he points out, a new notion of CC that recognizes English as a world language is needed and only as such it would aim at the realization of IC in ELT. Alptekin claims that a model based on native speaker norms is utopian, unrealistic, and constraining in relation to English language. Moreover, one cannot maintain that there is one correct and appropriate way to use English in a sense that one English variety is inherently superior to others. Also, as pointed out by Byram, Nichols, Stevens (2001), the nature of interaction between speakers of foreign language which is serving them as a lingua franca demands the recognition that it is neither suitable nor necessary for learners to model themselves on native speakers with respect to culture learning.

Another argument with regard to the complexity of IC in teaching language was presented by Godley (2012) who points out in her studies that it is not always easy to define the cultures that students identify themselves with when studying intercultural communication in educational settings, particularly in multicultural and multilingual schools. Although research on IC in schools has led to increased awareness among teachers that not all students use the same communication patterns. She argues that:

“as schools grow more linguistically and culturally diverse, (...) educators will need to dedicate more time and effort to learning about various and hybrid communication patterns their students use and to developing more productive strategies to teach intercultural communication to all students.” (p. 474).

Also, with regard to developing IC in FLT, very broad studies by Sercu and Bandura (2005) on how teachers perceive the cultural dimension of foreign language teaching give rise to questions, such as: What are teachers’ perceptions of IC? How those perceptions shape their instructional behaviour and classroom practice? Are teachers’ adequately prepared to promote IC?

2.3.1 Byram’s model of IC

All of the studies presented, perform different valuable functions in the pursuit of understanding of the dynamics encompassed in the concept of IC. However, in FLT, the most recognized, quoted and critically evaluated conceptualisation of IC is that developed
by the educationalist Michael Byram (1997). As his research on IC is acknowledged worldwide, many scholars use Byram’s conceptual framework in their studies and it also has a great significance to this study, thus needs clarification. Accordingly, a brief account of Byram’s model of IC is provided here for ease of reference.

Byram’s applications of IC within foreign language education stresses the appearance of a significant linking between teaching of language per se and acting interculturally as bringing two or more cultures into a relationship (Byram, 2009). In his work for the Council of Europe, Byram and his colleges made an attempt to develop what earlier was defined in the Council of Europe publications by van Ek (1986) as sociocultural competence. The sociocultural competence, earlier presented by van Ek, was complemented and replaced by IC. Initially, the model developed by Byram, Zarate and Neuner (1997) was termed as sociocultural competence and conveyed four types of competence set out in the form of objectives. Competence in this respect is a term that encompasses knowledge (savoir), skills/knowing how (savoir faire/ savoir comprendre), attitudes and values (savoir- être), and behaviour (comportement). The model was later developed with a fifth component critical cultural awareness (savoir s’engager), which has been associated with the purpose of politische Bildung in the German educational tradition (Byram, 2009).

Description of Byram’s five components:

- attitudes (savoir- être) of the intercultural speaker. This component enfolds curiosity and openness. This means that a person should be prepared to relativize their values and behaviours and not assume that they are the only possible and correct ones.

- knowledge (savoir) – in Byram’s model knowledge does not predominantly relate to knowledge about a specific culture, but rather knowledge of how social groups and social identities function, both one’s own and others.

- skills (savoir comprendre) – an ability to interpret, explain and relate to an event from another culture. Since intercultural speakers need to be able to see how

---

1 German educational tradition with an aim of encouraging learners to reflect critically on the values, beliefs, and behaviors of their own society.
misunderstandings can arise, and how they might be able to resolve them, they need the attitudes of decentring and skills to comparing.

- skills of discovery and interaction (savoir faire) – an ability to acquire new knowledge of a culture and cultural practices as well as skills and attitudes of under the constraints of real-time communication and interaction.
- critical cultural awareness (savoir s’engager) – an ability to evaluate, critically and on the basis of explicit criteria, practices and products in the speaker’s own and other cultures.

As repeatedly stressed by Byram, the purpose of teaching is not trying to change learners’ values, but to make them clear and conscious in any evaluative response to others.

“There is nonetheless a fundamental values position which all language teaching should promote: a position which acknowledges respect for human dignity and equality of human rights as the democratic basis for social interaction. The role of teachers is therefore to develop skills, attitudes and awareness of values just as much as develop knowledge of particular culture or country, or of different cultures within one’s own country.” (Byram, Nicols and Stevens, 2001, p. 7)

As presented above, there are many studies and theories on culture and language aspect as well as IC in FLT. The concept of interculturality is central in the Swedish National Board of Education policy documents and more specifically in the commentary supplement to the curriculum. Nevertheless, as Larzén (2005) points out in her study, relatively small attention has been paid to how the intercultural aspect is perceived by teachers. Byram and Risager (1999) in their research on foreign language teachers’ understanding of the concept ‘culture’ in teaching language conclude that teachers appear to be lacking in-depth knowledge and understanding of the complexity of the concept. “There is a concentration on ‘national’ culture and little attention to aspects of culture beyond those already found in textbooks.” (p. 105). Larzén (2005) points out that teachers are aware of the significance of integrating cultural aspects in language teaching; yet, they do not always problematize the complexity of the concept of culture. Moreover, they do not implement it in their own teaching in ways that would effectively promote intercultural understanding. Sercu and Bandura (2005), claim that in order to support the intercultural learning process, foreign language teachers need additional knowledge, attitudes, competencies, and skills to the ones hitherto thought as essential and sufficient
for teaching CC in a foreign language. Therefore, they should be able to employ teaching techniques that promote the acquisition of all the five components developed by Byram. Accordingly, Sercu provides an intercultural competence teacher profile that is grounded in Byram’s framework for IC and conducts a study on how professional self-concepts of teachers of FL relate to the envisaged profile and if their teaching practice can be characterized as directed towards the attainment of IC instead of towards CC. He concludes that progress is being made and that teachers are willing to include intercultural objectives in their teaching. However, his assumption that teachers favour the teaching of communicative competence over intercultural communicative competence found confirmation.

3. Methodology

In order to address the research question, I used an exploratory investigation by adopting a qualitative research method in form of semi-structured interviews. The participants in this research are six English teachers of different upper secondary schools in Sweden, from which five teach English at upper secondary and one at upper secondary for adults (komvux). This exploratory research aims to focus on participants’ beliefs, understanding and perception as this is on the subject of this study and a methodology in form of interviews is an effective tool to achieve this purpose. Besides, a semi-structured interview was the most suitable type of interview for this study because it allows an interviewer to follow up interesting developments and let the interviewee elaborate on certain issues (Dörnyei, 2007). It also allows to ask the interviewee the same questions but not necessarily in the same order or wording, which was necessary in this research since some of the participants touched upon various aspects while answering particular questions. My goals, as an interviewer, were: to let the interview flow naturally by seamlessly connecting subsequent questions, trying to be neutral and not imposing any personal bias, and let the interviewee dictate the pace focusing primarily on listening. This emic approach helped to obtain information about the participants’ understanding of the investigated topic and allowed developing of different themes, patterns and ideas. Interviews are also suitable tools of phenomenographic methodology in qualitative research that provide different ways in which people think of various concepts and aims to discover qualitatively different ways of how people experience, understand and interpret various aspects of an investigated phenomena (Marton, 1986).
In order to obtain as in-depth information about the teachers’ interpretation of IC the participants received a letter which served as an informed consent with a short description of the aim of the research, the interview questions, and the information about anonymity and voluntary character of the participation (Appendix A). The letter was sent one week before the interview so that the teachers could prepare themselves for the discussed topic and accordingly provide as detailed information as possible. The interview was piloted on a sample of two English teacher candidates to avoid missing responses or misunderstandings. The participants were asked several questions that were designed to elicit information about their understanding of the term of IC, the role of culture in their teaching and their understanding of the curriculum requirements with regards to teaching culture and IC (Appendix B). The questions about providing examples of how the participants teach IC where posed solely in order to obtain information about the teachers’ perceptions with regards to IC. Asking such questions enabled me to investigate how the teachers interpreted the concept consciously and intuitively. In other words, the questions were valuable for investigating the nuances in their understanding of the concept.

Since it is rather difficult to recruit teachers who would voluntarily participate in such studies, a convenience sampling was used to select the participants and networking was a method of recruitment. At this point, I would like to notify that two of the teachers that participate in the study are my colleagues. Two of the participants – who I will refer to as Ella and Caroline – are women and four – Rick, Martin, Ove, and Jonas – are men. The participants work in different parts of Sweden, four of them work in Stockholm and two of them in Umeå. There is also a difference in work experience with regards to the amount of years working as an English teacher. Giving the variety of the participants’ backgrounds, the data collected contributes with different opinions and observations which can be considered as an advantage for the research. However, factual questions such as gender, age, or linguistic background were not directly asked during the interview.

The interview was conducted in English with five of the six participants. The interview that was conducted in Swedish will be translated for the content only in the results section. Three of the teachers were interviewed at their workplace, one at home and two at Stockholm University. The interviews length varies between 14 and 35 minutes. Apparently, the setting had some effect on the way the participants elaborated on the questions that were posed. The teachers that were interviewed at their workplace provided more detailed information about their teaching methods and showed examples
of different assignments and books that they use, which resulted in the length of the interviews.

Initially, a classroom observation was considered to investigate this topic but was eventually omitted as classroom observations are mostly used to investigate how teaching and learning take place in context (Dörnyei, 2007) – which in this case would be an observation of how IC is taught – and the purpose of this study was solely to investigate teachers’ perception of the concept of IC. However, as the teachers participating in this study provided examples of how they teach IC a follow-up studies using classroom observation as a method would be an adequate choice to investigate this topic.

The interviews were transcribed and the data was analyzed and interpreted by repeated close reading. In order to identify relevant themes, shared patterns and points of discrepancy in the participants’ views and attitudes, the responses were collected and assigned to the theoretical context including Byram’s five components of IC. Also, the participants’ responses were construed and used to conclude what are the opportunities and the obstacles for teaching IC with regards to a social context. This is based on Lundgren (2002) study where she used two social contexts in her analysis of the teachers’ discourse: (a) collective social practice (macro-context) – society and central guidance through curriculum (b) individual social practice (micro-context) – the school, classroom environment and factors within a teacher.

As in any research, there are limitation and room for improvement. There are many questions that were not posed during the interviews and many insightful studies that were not taken into consideration but my ambition as a researcher had to be weighed against the restraints of time and resources as well as the space available to report the data. This research does not attempt to generalize the phenomena since it principally draws on a self-reported data, however, the results can be transferable and invite to make connections between various constituents of the study with a target population.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Understanding of the concept of intercultural competence

In the beginning of each interview the teachers were asked was if they were familiar with
the concept of intercultural competence. They answered as follows:

**Martin:** “Yes, I'm slightly familiar with the concept yes.”

**Caroline:** “I am yes. But my interpretation is very much colored by the curriculum and the three courses I teach.”

**Jonas:** “I would say I probably am familiar with the concept but I don't think I have ever used the term to be honest.”

**Ella:** “Not those particular words … and not as a concept in itself. But the way I interpret it when I read your question is what I am doing more or less … (laugh) … all the time, I think, in my teaching. (…) No one has told me about it... at the teaching training college.”

**Rick:** “So going beyond just trying to understand the concept, no I'm not really that familiar with it. It’s not really something I have encountered in that many places no, especially not in a curriculum or anything.”

Three of the teachers answered that they were not familiar with the concept as such, two teachers said they were familiar with the concept, however, as seen in the responses, the way the teachers answered the question showed noticeable hesitation and uncertainty. For the following question of the participants’ understanding of the concept of IC, they answered as follows:

**Martin:** “My understanding of the concept intercultural competence is that it is quite important to have an acknowledgement when it comes to people’s different cultures and variation and have an understanding for their background and their thoughts regarding the moral and ethical perspectives.”

**Caroline:** “It is the ability for our pupils to vary, according to their acquired context, their written and spoken English … And … To be able to know beforehand which one to use or which ones to switch to so to speak … And therefore their also, the ability to interpret a certain context or a situation.”

**Rick:** “I'm guessing it has to do with basically teaching like the values of other cultures in regards to our students L1 which is Swedish. (…) I understand it has to do with just teaching cultural values. I mean as far as I understand. Am I close or?”

**Ella:** “Ok, at the moment because there are always trends you know … this is of course timely since we have all the immigrants coming now in such a … more than before … So it's highly relevant of course and the thing is I see it as a … as a treasure (…) we have different cultural backgrounds … So I see it as a treasure, what do I mean by treasure, well think about all this

---

2 One of the interviewees was asked the question in the beginning of the interview but due to technological problems with the recorder the answer will not be included in the results section.
knowledge, all these experiences, they know things about places I’ve never been to, you know?”

**Jonas:** “My understanding of intercultural competence would be the ability to adapt to a certain cultural context. And what I mean by that is being able to predict how another person from a difference cultural context will react to things I say and ways I think. And manners in which I present myself.”

**Ove:** “For me it's that they should learn the language, and learn about ... well they should learn both the language and English, as I have said, is not just a language, and then it is more about learning about other countries and some other type of governance, and the history that differs so incredibly much if you look at, for example the old colonies, in ... old British colonies away in Asia. (...) There is also some kind of intercultural.”

All of the teachers answered similarly, defining IC as teaching values of different cultures and countries and how to react in different social contexts. Nevertheless, none of them addressed in their answer to the theory or frameworks, instead they referred to their understanding of a formerly encountered term. The analysis of the teachers’ responses provides a striking notion that their perception of the concept of IC determinedly rely on the content of the curriculum (in fact, Caroline revealed this connection openly) which, as it should be pointed out, does not use the concept explicitly and which instead stresses the importance of cultural variation and plurilingualism. Accordingly, the teachers answered the question of how they understand the concept of IC similarly as they answered the question about their understanding of the policy documents with regards to culture teaching and interculturality. For instance, Martin says:

“Well my understanding (of the curriculum) would be that it is quite important to expose students when you have … in upper secondary schools in general that it's quite important to give them the material that will give them the opportunity of understanding other cultures, understanding other feelings, understanding how to use a certain language in which context to be used in.”

Similarly as in Caroline’s, the curriculum guidance is clearly apparent in Martin’s understanding of IC. He emphasises it in his response to the question if he encountered

---

3 My translation of: för mig är det ju liksom att de ska lära sig språket, och så lära sig om ... ja de ska både lära sig språket och engelskan är ju som sagt inte bara ett språk och då hänger det ju mer där att man måste läsa lite om andra länder och lite andra styressätt och historian skiljer ju sig så otroligt mycket åt om man tittar på till exempel gamla kolonier i... gamla brittiska kolonier borta i Asien och varför vart det så, och hur har det funkat där och hur har det blivit sen. Det är också någon form av interkulturellt...”
the concept during his education, he says:

“To my recollection there is nothing that I can come up with right now but something that I have been exposed to throughout my entire educational program is that in the curriculum, we have been working a lot with the curriculum and as you read it out loud for me there quite a big passage where they mention the cultural aspects and the cultural variation so I have been exposed to that, definitely.”

When analysing the other teachers’ response to the question of how do they understand the curriculum requirements and the commentary supplement, the same pattern is observable. They answered as follows:

**Caroline**: “Well my understanding of it is that I’m supposed to teach them various ways of expressing themselves in English and also what it sounds like in various cultures while *incomprehensible* as easy methods as listening to news from South Africa, some news with and Indian accent. Maybe listen to somebody who speaks with an Australian accent and so on and so forth.”

**Ella**: “Aha, now I understand that it's a wider concept than I ... So intercultural is also different social situations (...) So we try to give them the academic language and the way we write reports etc. They write different genres, also when speaking of course.”

**Rick**: “And as I understand the commentary, even though they state things like interkulturella or intercultural and they talk about intercultural aspects and cultural codes. The only thing in here that actually talks about like cultural codes and intercultural aspects or språkmarkörer för artighet cause otherwise it’s basically just uppträda i olika sammanhang because that is the focus here. (...) So what they are focusing on, even though they are mentioning intercultural aspects they are really only talking about that you should tell your students to react this way in an academic setting, this way in an informal setting.”

**Jonas**: “I would say is something along the lines of what I scoped out earlier, being able to predict how a certain person from a certain cultural context will react to me and the way I might adapt to make them react in a certain way.”

**Ove**: “Yes, I agree with all of it, I surely do it, a student should be given the opportunity to developmental knowledge of ... etc. Which is almost hopeless, given that they spend so little time to actively learn language (...) And just listening to English from different countries, different cultures... different dialects, I mean there are dialects in the US that are also equal to the difference between, it's like a big difference in dialects between say New York and

4 My translation: Language markers of courtesy

5 My translation: performing in various contexts
The teachers seem to understand the concept of IC as an alternative expression for cultural variety and a variety of cultural contexts as it is presented in the curriculum. With the evident absence of the theoretical background behind the concept of IC in the teachers’ responses, none of the teachers except for Rick, addressed the necessity of clarifying the concept and providing the practical applications for it by the policy makers. Rick says:

“I think one of the many things that needs to be changed about the current teacher education is that we need to learn a bit more about how both, what exactly intercultural competence is and also how to make like concrete examples of how to implement that in your teaching. Because as I said earlier the curriculum itself is just not enough. So we need further guidance of how to both approach the term and how to properly use it. That's all.”

This statement confirms Lundgren (2002) conclusion that the official guidelines are vague and contradictory and that the curriculum is not up-to-date with the current research. Even though the commentary supplement to the curriculum adheres to the use of the concepts such as: intercultural skills, or intercultural awareness, it moderately allows interpretations instead of providing the practical applications. This corresponds also to Ruane’s (1999) claim that despite the common acceptance of the need to specify culture in the language curriculum it is still not clear how it should be handled within the various aspects of language pedagogy. Also, there is clearly an issue of how (inter)cultural constituents can be handled in language teacher education programmes, in terms of both, content and methodology. In addition to it, Rick arguments:

“It's very vague as the curriculum tends to be in general but it's says we should have knowledge of living conditions, social issues and cultural features but just by saying that they should develop this, this and this doesn't really mean that I as a teacher know what they mean by those things.”

---

6 My translation of: Ja men alltså, jag håller med om alltihop, det där gör ju jag att 'students should be given the opportunity to develop knowledge of … etc.' Vilket ju nästan är hopplöst med tanke på att de ägnar så lite tid åt att aktivt lära sig språket (…) just det att man lyssnar på engelska från olika länder, olika kulturer och … olika dialekter inte minst, jag menar det finns ju dialekter i USA också som är lika stor skillnad mellan, det är ju lika stor skillnad på dialekterna mellan låt oss säga New York och midwestern dialekt är ju enorm skillnad.
Rick’s further response enhances his negative attitude towards the curriculum requirements as well as to the idea of teaching IC in the existing settings. He says:

“Honestly said this is such a small part of English course and there are so many other things that we need to put more focus on or just do, really. It does not really mean that much for my teaching if I express how it is now. Just reading this makes me think about this more but it does not really affect me in the way it probably should because I feel like I don't really have time to delve into intercultural competence in the way that they seem to want me to.”

4.2 View of culture in ELT

The teachers’ understanding of the concept of IC might be a consequence of their general view on culture in language teaching. The teachers’ answers suggest that culture is basically perceived as how other people live and think and in their responses transpires a noticeable similarity in their view on culture. However, there are exceptions and some discrepancies at this matter. Caroline says:

“We read short stories, one is from Sri Lanka, this one, and it's gives a good insight into family values and how, for instance, age helps people gaining respect and how... young children are taught to respect whatever it is by older people. But also how family gatherings actually happen. So ... and also somewhere, some ways of speaking that might not be like natural for people in Sweden. The second was, is from Australia, there is one from Britain and one from America (...) Apart from their course book which has a number of text from a lot of English speaking countries we also try to listen to different accents.”

Furthermore, Caroline augments:

“I took my exam 1997 (...) we read a lot of literature (...) so we have touched upon various cultural, or various cultures in English speaking countries. (...) when I attended the teacher training college then the last part of becoming an English teacher they sent us all abroad for one semester so I studied one semester in Northern Ireland which gave me personally a lot. We very much focused, were more focused, on academic English I guess than intercultural competence, and then there were a variety of courses you could choose when you studied literature.”

Caroline’s answer suggests that her understanding of culture and IC is mainly shaped in the module of literature studies. A consequence of it, according to Byram and Morgan
(1994) is that teachers’ knowledge of the culture with regard to English language teaching is adequate to support their literary competence but their study of culture and society are rather incidental and based on personal, experimental learning rather than systematic description and analysis. This form of acquiring a linguistic fluency and understanding of language and culture is unquestionable, however, such practice varies from individual to individual and from one educational system to another and does not guarantee acquisition of knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed for development of IC. Ove’s view on culture in language teaching is similar to Caroline’s and what is salient in his description of classroom practice is that he applies very much the principle that language has to be developed before it’s used. He says:

”But it is the language that is important. And it is there, where I work with. Then we read the texts of extremely diverse variety, reading course, then I have even read the abstracts of dissertations with my students. And reading cookbooks, reading books on medicine, reading mathematical representations, but it is for them to become familiar with the language used.”

As pointed out by Tornberg (2000), this leads to “world exercises” in which what is exercised, for instance going to a restaurant, does not correspond to the reality and the only clue that is given is a verbal instruction. Also, Ove accentuates often in his comments very bad English skills of his pupils, which perhaps explains his approach to language teaching.

”Students nowadays in general are insanely bad in English (...) So the dilemma is that I think you have to spend so much time to teach them to even be able to read a relatively simple text. Vocabulary, simple text, and then improve on this vocabulary, that’s what you have to work with. Increase in vocabulary but also the formality so that they can use those words and express a thought”

Another noticeable issue in Ove’s description of his teaching is that culture is definable

---

7 My translation of: ”Men det är ju språket som är det viktiga. Och det är där, där jobbar jag med. Sen läser vi texter av oerhört varierande sort, man läser ju, alltså jag har till och med läst abstract på doktorsavhandlingar med mina elever. Och man läser kokböcker, man läser böcker i medicin, man läser matematiska framställningar, men det är för att de ska bli bekanta med det språk som används.”

8 ”De är idag i allmänhet, eleverna, vansinnigt dåliga rent i engelska (...) Så dilemmat är att jag tycker att man måste ägna så mycket tid åt det här att, att få dem att överhuvudtaget klara av att läsa en relativt hyfsad, enkel text. Ordförrådsmässigt enkel text, och sen öka på det här ordförrådet, det är det man får jobba med. Öka på ordförrådet men även det formella att de faktiskt då kan använda de där orden och uttrycka en tanke.”
mainly in national terms. Which results in culture being just a background knowledge of a country one might visit or work in.

"For many years in the restaurant school here I had pupils who after finishing the school went to England and got a job at the best restaurants. They knew the name of every tool in the kitchen, and every spice, every single cutting detail, and not only on a cow, but goats, and pigs, and sheep, and even the game, then the game." 9

Tornberg (2000) argues that this kind of knowledge should not be presented as objective facts about a country but as a multidimensional, value-laden, relative and constantly changing manifestations. As presented below, Rick has a similar to Ove’s approach to the teaching of culture:

“I try to get in as much cultural and intercultural aspects (…) is basically by doing weekly news quizzes and I try to involve news casts covering multiple parts of the world. (…) I do have a task that they just did which is called a summer response paper where they choose a topic about an English speaking country where it could be for example human rights or child abuse. And then they themselves investigate about those topics using journal articles and stuff like that.”

Ove, Cecilia and Rick more often than the other teachers use the phrase English speaking countries in their comments even though the curriculum says: “Students should be given the opportunity to develop knowledge of living conditions, social issues and cultural features in different contexts and parts of the world where English is used.” (Skolverket, 2012a, p.1). Given that English is a widespread language, virtually the entire world could be taken into account. However, the analysis of the interviews does not fully support the results of the previous studies (Lundgren, 2005) concerning culture studies in Swedish schools that show that teachers mainly choose cultural elements from the UK and the US and seldom from the other English speaking countries. The participants pointed out the importance of referring to different countries and cultures by referring to English varieties, or even as it is manifested in Ove’s comments, explicitly avoiding to focus on

9 “Jag hade under många år när restaurangskolan här började. Jag hade ju alltså kockar som gick ut här som kunde åka till England, få jobb på de bästa krogarna, och visste vad varenda redskap i köket hette, och varenda krydda, varenda styckningsdetalj, och är inte bara på ko, utan på ko, på getter, och på grisar, och på får, och på, även på game, alltså på vilt.”
the UK and the US in teaching. Nevertheless, the place of culture in their English teaching mostly corresponds to – using Tornberg’s terminology – view of culture as a fact fulfilled and/or a future competence. Also, referring to Kramsch (1993), as an extendable fifth skill where culture is viewed predominantly as customs, literature, and history of the target country.

Eva, Martin and Jonas, on the other hand, do not limit their teaching of culture to the English speaking countries, at least not to the same extent. Martin who teaches many non-Swedish students chooses to include Swedish and other countries’ traditions as well. In Martin’s lesson design there is also a notion of raising awareness to differences.

“If we are talking domestically in Sweden I would say that having discussing the Christmas traditions for example that’s something that everyone are familiarized with. We have people that maybe come from different religious beliefs and different countries and they are not familiarized with the Christmas holidays and maybe that’s a good thing to do, to tell them so they can understand and that way they will get an understanding of how different cultures work (...) maybe if we have a lesson in hemkunskap10 for example where students can learn how different cultures and food function. (...) They are being exposed to something such as a Spanish or French movie which is subtitled in (...) English that is also a way to learn a new culture, a variation of it.”

Jonas, who teaches adults, in his reference to the policy documents, stresses his divergent approach to how cultural aspect are (as he understands it) presented in the commentary supplement. He points out:

“I tend to I think interpret culture a bit wider or a bit abstract than at least the commentary section here because that is quite specific isn’t it? Which codes do you use in England? Which codes do you use in India? Which codes do you use in Hong Kong? And so forth. I tend to focus more I think on where these codes come from in what way does a British person think differently from an American person for instance in my teaching.”

Jonas includes interculturality by combining teaching English with other subjects and by using tools such as: Gapminder and the World Value Survey. The way he interprets the curriculum requirement allows to think that teaching language is not only restricted to teach about English speaking countries but regards the language mostly as a tool to talk

---

10 Domestic science
about different subjects by developing knowledge and understanding. “I always think that if we are talking English it is ok to call it an English lesson.”. For Jonas, factual knowledge is part of his teaching but he wants to teach his students about facts by reflecting over their own values and beliefs. He stresses the importance of acknowledging the diversity and tries to encourage his pupils to be open minded.

“I found this culture studies module by this guy called Hofstadter which had been researching lots and lots of difference countries and looking at it from different axis I may call it. Whether the citizens of this countries would expect to be able to influence public policy whether they plan for the future, whether they tend to look at people as individuals or collectives and so forth. We used that model to practice analysis foremost.”

Ella’s view on culture teaching is somewhat restricted to teaching classic literature and formal/informal English. However, alike Jonas, she sees a potential for the development of IC in her multicultural classroom. She uses the word “treasure” when referring to IC and stresses its importance of seeing another human by gradually getting to know him. According to Eva, the pupils will develop IC by acknowledging the multicultural society as Sweden is and through getting a broader perspective on themselves and others.

“What does your name mean? Does it mean anything? In your mother tongue of course ... etc... And then we can get into ... certain things and if they don't know they can find out ... (laugh) ... Without that ... because it's the way of seeing the individual that's one thing you create a good communication. (...) Ok so course books yes, and also I use the asset that knowledge and experiences of the students constitute.”

Creating a sharing environment is an important part of her teaching and a starting point for building acceptance and a friendly atmosphere. She finds the pupils’ interests crucial in her teaching:

“Why are we only talking about Ireland and England and etc., ok this is English but more relevant for them is their own country to show that so they were really happy ... to share this (...) in a project such as this one it's much better if they take a country that they are ... either know a lot about already ... or ... so they could teach the others I mean ... Or countries that they are curious about.”

22
Ella, if we apply Tornberg’s terminology, tends to see culture not only as *a fact fulfilled or a future competence* but also as *an encounter in an open space* that emphasises the student’s influential role and participation in the real-time experience that leads to a joint formation of a *third culture*. In this process individuals are viewed as unique persons with the ability to do something unpredicted and original. As pointed out by Lixian and Cortazzi (1995) it is not very usual to consider the culture that learners bring to a foreign language classroom and its relationship to the target culture. It is imperative to acknowledge that language learning by recognizing one’s own culture in a process of learning about another is more likely to support developing intercultural skills. The approach that allows pupils to bring their own cultural presuppositions and presenting those of others may, in cases of multicultural classroom, be a solution to build a bridge of intercultural learning. As Lixian and Cortazzi conclude, it is also important to safeguard the learners’ culture by respecting it and considering it as a key role in negotiating mutual meanings and coming to understand others’ identities.

### 4.3 Byram’s *savoirs* in the teachers’ perception of intercultural competence.

Applying Byram’s model of IC, the teachers’ perception of the concept merely addresses four of the five components, which are: *savoir* (knowledge), *savoir comprendre* (skills to interpret), *savoir faire* (skills of discovery and interaction), and *savoir s’engager* (critical cultural awareness). The *savoir s’engager* – critical cultural awareness was scarcely existent the teachers’ discourse and *savoir-être* – attitudes, not present at all. Teachers, similarly to those in Lundgren (2005) or Sercu and Bandura (2005) studies, seem to attempt to integrate the five *savoirs* in teaching English, however, the lack of the theoretical background makes this attempt ineffective. Table 1 presents which of the five *savoirs* are exposed in the teachers’ responses to the interview questions. The teachers individually, based on their responses, do not integrate all of the components in their practice and since the acquiring of IC involves all of the five *savoirs* we cannot conclude that developing IC is present in the teachers’ classroom practice. It seems that only Jonas’ description of his teaching and understanding of IC closely corresponds to Byram’s model.
Table 1. Byram’s *savoirs* in the teachers’ perception of intercultural competence.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Savoirs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Martin   | • knowledge (*savoir*)  
          | • skills (*savoir comprendre*) |
| Rick     | • knowledge (*savoir*)  
          | • skills (*savoir comprendre*) |
| Ella     | • knowledge (*savoir*)  
          | • skills (*savoir comprendre*)  
          | • skills of discovery and interaction (*savoir faire*), |
| Caroline | • knowledge (*savoir*)  
          | • skills (*savoir comprendre*) |
| Ove      | • knowledge (*savoir*)  
          | • skills (*savoir comprendre*)  
          | • skills of discovery and interaction (*savoir faire*),  
          | • critical cultural awareness (*savoir s’engager*) |
| Jonas    | • knowledge (*savoir*)  
          | • skills (*savoir comprendre*)  
          | • critical cultural awareness (*savoir s’engager*) |

The lack of the five *savoirs* in the teachers’ perception of IC could be linked to their view of culture in the English language teaching. Accordingly, this view has a large influence on their classroom practice and this direct relation between their perception and teaching is rather clear in the collected data.

4.4 Opportunities and obstacles in macro- and micro-contexts.

According to the interviews, the obstacles for the developing of IC in teaching English could be found both in macro- and micro-contexts. The teachers, when asked if they found any difficulties with teaching IC answered as follows:

**Martin:** “I meet many difficulties into implementing but it's not ... I wouldn't blame the curriculum for that. I would blame actually I don't want to say blame but, my teacher colleagues, lack of motivation for the students for example, you can have students that don't understand why they have been exposed to a certain cultural aspect (…)”

**Ella:** “Well, I don't see why it should be in particular difficulties? (…) (when asked if she sees some problems with assessing IC) Aha, ok, ok. Well... Not really no. I have assessed so many many, many, many essays over the years.”

**Caroline:** “Yeah, it is related to motivation I would say. The, the ... If a pupil is not motivated to go on with further studies it's difficult to teach them ... or teach them ... to make them
understand the relevance of using a reference system for instances, we are writing essays with sources.”

**Rick:** “That's a good question but since I don't really focus on it that much in my teaching there is not really that much to pose since the part of the intercultural competence I do involve, largely involve like global news.”

**Ove:** “It depends so much on how you define the term intercul... for me, it's as well that they should learn the language, and so learning about ... well they'll both learn the language (...) and that they have read about other countries.”

The answers show that the teachers do not find teaching IC as a particularly difficult task and none of the teachers mentioned assessment as a possible difficulty. As pointed out by Paran and Sercu (2010), assessing IC is considered as one of the biggest challenges for foreign language teachers. The fact that the teachers did not refer to assessment as an obstacle for teaching IC could be explained by the fact that they did not refer to IC per se but rather to their perception of teaching culture as a relatively invariant and stagnant unit which is classifiable and therefore learnable. Teaching IC, as revealed in the interviews, merely promotes the acquisition of cultural knowledge and therefore what is assessed is only what is measurable. As pointed out by Paran and Sercu (2010), to assess IC holistically, a teacher needs to assess to what extend learners can be viewed as intercultural beings, presence or absence of intercultural values and attitudes, and demonstrations of such attitudes and values in a student’s attitudinal behaviors. Hitherto, such a holistic measure is not existing in the contemporary curriculum. This corresponds to Gu’s (2015) findings, that despite a willingness to assess IC, the EFL teachers lack a clear conception of IC, which leads to confusion about what should be assessed and how to assess it. The fact that with the existing knowledge and available tools it seems impracticable for the teachers to assess IC determine what they regard as valuable and required knowledge. Thus, not having an access to applicable criteria for assessing and appropriate guiding through the policy documents (macro-context) can be considered as an obstacle for teaching IC. Even though only one teacher expressed the need for a central guidance to be more specific, it is clear that the policy makers do not provide a sufficient source of information about how to implement the element of interculturality in teaching English.

---

11 Alltså det beror ju så mycket på hur man definierar uttrycket intercul...för mig är det ju liksom att de ska lära sig språket, och så lära sig om... ja dom ska både lära sig språket (...) att man måste läsa lite om andra länder
Although the recent societal changes require recognising IC in teaching foreign language, only three of the teachers stressed the importance of acknowledging multicultural classroom (micro-context) as a resource and an opportunity for teaching IC. In Sweden, a multicultural and accordingly multilingual classroom is rather a standard than an exception and it creates a context that is by nature a potential platform for developing IC. The opportunities offered by this micro-context should be regarded as advantages for developing IC by the teachers. However, as pointed out by Byram (2009b), “Of crucial importance for the maintenance and development of multicultural societies is the provision of educational strategies that raise awareness of the issues and foster intercultural dialogue and communication.” (p. 8)

Concluding, with regards to micro-context, the teachers referred to it rather as an obstacle than an opportunity pointing out impediments such as: being overworked, having not top-notch students, or work colleagues that do not help with developing IC in their school. Also, what emerged during the interviews, a still predominant traditional view of culture could be added as an obstacle in a micro-context. The macro-context, in form of policy documents, based on the teachers’ responses does not seem to invite opportunities to effectively work with the developing of IC in English teaching.

4. Conclusion

These results suggest that intercultural dimension in English teaching has not been fully endorsed by the teachers. This could be accredited to various factors within macro-, and micro-context presented above. The results, to some extent, support the previous investigations in the subject matter as those by Lundgren, (2005) or Larzén, (2005). All the teachers seem to regard IC as significant, however, although they claim (except for Jonas) that teaching IC is a part of planning, they do not seem to implement it as an explicit task in their classroom practice. Given the complexity and significance of IC in the English language teaching, to understand the dynamics involved in the concept of IC, teachers need to be familiarized with the theory and available framework that is at an advantage in examining and clarifying the issue. Concurrently, as pointed out by Sercu (1998), teachers are skeptical with regards to new waves and trends as well as to new theoretical concepts, which they regard as an unnecessary ballast of grey theory. Without having acquired the necessary professional terminology used by the policy makers, in this
case the National Board of Education, teachers will have difficulties to discuss and reflect upon their own teaching and practical applications of the theories. Also, since there is an implied directive in the policy documents to include and promote developing IC in FLT it should be investigated how to develop a systematic and valid assessment tools for different age and ability groups as well as curricula, from which all the parties can benefit. One of the most evident aspects that the study revealed is that there is a need to concretize what knowledge, skills and attitudes an English language teacher should acquire in order to be able to support their pupils in developing IC. The accountabilities in this area are immense, therefore if teachers aspire to successfully move towards an envisaged model of an interculturally competent teacher they need to reflect over their own view of culture in foreign language teaching as well as the recent research on teaching objectives that accurately identifies the intercultural dimension in the current social circumstances.

5. Implementations for teaching

The study has revealed a number of deficiencies in the teachers’ understanding of IC. Consequently, these deficiencies create obstacles for the teachers to effectively promote interculturality in their teaching practice. The results show that there are opportunities for improvement and therefore several implementations for teaching. First of all, culture teaching requires a critical dimension. Therefore, teachers and teacher students need deeper knowledge of the cultural aspect in FLT that should be anchored in the available theories and frameworks. Secondly, policy documents should include a clear and applicable definition of IC and should clarify the assessment criteria. At the moment, the concept of IC is being left for individual interpretation by a teacher who applies this interpretation into his/her classroom practice. For that reason, teachers should be familiarized with the recent research with regards to IC and encouraged to problematize the curriculum content with regards to culture teaching. Lastly, educational authorities cannot simply introduce teachers to “new theories” but should invest in an in-service teacher training as one proposed by Sercu (1998), that builds on the acquisition of IC and supply a teacher with the skills, abilities and reflective attitudes that are indispensable in teaching of IC.
References


Appendix A

Dear Participant,

The purpose of my research is to examine teachers’ perception of culture and intercultural competence in teaching English.

The interview questions are:

1. Are you familiar with the concept *intercultural competence*?
2. What is your understanding of the concept *intercultural competence*?

According to English curriculum for upper secondary “Students should be given the opportunity to develop knowledge of living conditions, social issues and cultural features in different contexts and parts of the world where English is used. Teaching should encourage students' curiosity in language and culture, and give them the opportunity to develop plurilingualism where skills in different languages interact and support each other.” (Skolverket, 2011)

Moreover, the commentary supplement for the curriculum (Kommentarmaterial till kursplanen i engelska) says: “Undervisningen i engelska ska ge eleverna möjlighet att utveckla en allsidig kommunikativ förmåga. I en sådan förmåga ingår såväl sociala som interkulturella och språkliga aspekter. De sociala och interkulturella aspekterna innebär att man kan anpassa sitt språk till olika situationer, syften och mottagare. I en social och interkulturell förmåga ingår att så långt som möjligt känna till och använda de kulturella koder och det språkbruk som behövs för att kunna kommunicera i både formella och informella situationer. Det kan handla om ordval, språkmarkörer för artighet, hur jag inleder ett brev eller mejl, hur jag uppträder i olika sammanhang eller tuckar och säger nej.”

3. What is your understanding of this part of the curriculum? What does it mean for your teaching?
4. Is teaching intercultural competence a part of your planning or is it a spontaneous activity during a lesson?
5. Do you use textbooks or/and other material to support teaching intercultural competence in your classroom practice?
6. How do you design your lessons to implement the curriculum requirements with regards to intercultural competence? Provide examples.

The interviews will be recorded and transcribed but all the information you provide is confidential. If you would like a summary of the research findings, or if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Thank you for participating,

Anna Israelsson
Appendix B

Interview 1 – Ella

A: I will start with the first question. Are you familiar with the concept intercultural competence?

S: Not those particular words … and not as a concept in itself. But the way I interpret it when I read your question is what I am doing more or less … (laugh) … all the time, I think, in my teaching. You know I have for example … language introduction course, språkintroduktion, there are different levels there, I have … not the new beginners but the next level. Ok. There are four groups … Anyway … there we have, do you want me to get into examples now?

A: Yes, you can tell me what is your understanding of intercultural competence?

S: What my understanding is … Well the way I would interpret it … I understand now because of your question that this is probably a concept … (laugh) … No one has told me about it … at the teaching training college. Ok, at the moment because there are always trends you know. And I mean this is … this is of course timely since we have all the immigrants coming now in such a … more than before … So it's highly relevant of course and the thing is I see it as a … as a treasure with the students in the language introduction and I have the students also … we have different cultural backgrounds. You know in ordinary classes also, in my class … I am a mentor in grade three, ok. Social sciences program, ok … So I see it as a treasure, what do I mean by treasure, well think about all this knowledge, all these experiences, they know things about places I've never been to you know. And when I am teaching English … specifically … it's always … it's a … I try to connect because some of them do not speak Swedish that well … either … and then we … we get into ah … maybe they have studied English earlier, well they have. But they have forgotten since they have focused on learning Swedish when they came here. So there is a sort of gap in their English, for some of them … and of course you notice differences so I try to find some similar … (sigh) … if there are any connections. I ask
them – what is this in your language? I describe the thing that I am after you know... and get into ... first thing I ask ... what does your name mean? Does it mean anything? In your mother tongue of course… etc. And then we can get into ... certain things and if they don't know they can find out ... (laugh) … Without that because it's the way of seeing the individual that's one thing you create a good communication. That we … well, and of course you gotta have this *incomprehensible* so you don't ... you know invade people. We don't do that because you got to read them, some are shy and some are … you know ... don't want to talk that much so... that depends you know ... but ... I have ... for that is the basic foundation that the teaching ... or every method or whatever topic subject matter the basis, the foundation is this that you reach through ... that you actually reach the person. And when you have like ah ... I have ... I have now seven groups. One is a small group of fourteen students that's the economy class I was talking about. It's not easy this individualization we are talking about etc. But anyways back to this intercultural, so I ... it's an asset, it's like a treasure like I said and an asset ... not only the many different languages that we have represented in a regular classroom. You would be surprised, or not ... yes … and also try to find I mean … I studied French and a little Spanish … and I have a few Spanish speaking students ... so ... and they are also so happy to show ... and also we get a bit of geography where is... we are talking about rivers, water ... because there was a text in their course book about Dublin and the Liffey River, ok. So I mean ... and from there when to, why are we only talking about Ireland and England and etc. ok, this in English but more relevant for them is their own country to show that so they were really happy ... to to … to share this ... many of them did very very polite and nice students in this language introduction groups. Eager to learn most of the time ... So we try to... so there is really intercultural. I mean... this ah... and when it comes to the curriculum and the course plan... a... of course one thing that I always plan usually in grade 1, sometimes in English 6 grade 2 is the presentation or... in some way or other... Present an English speaking country. But now when I presented this idea in one of my groups yesterday somebody said... the guy said” Well, could you take like Spain” and that's not English speaking but still he was really interested in it. So I said well... I guess you could because you could always... In that case you could investigate, research or tell us about the English education in Spain for example. And if there are loan words or any other connections you could come up with. So we still are sort of talking about English, of the English language somehow.
A: So different cultures not only those mainstream cultures?

S: No that's right, that's right... Then it was much easier... because of course it's better if... sometimes you need to do things that maybe they don't feel for that much grammar, ok. But in a project such as this one it's much better if they take a country that they are... either know a lot about already... or so they could teach the others I mean... Or countries that they are curious.

A: And just talk about it in English?

S: They present... make a regular presentation also with audio-visual aids. So then they will also... let’s say they take Australia, South Africa then they should give examples also either film clips or sound clips, so we can have... hear the spoken accent... the dialect, the variety. So we get different varieties, and that's also the way that the course books are structured. And the cd’s that go with them. We have Shortcuts 2 in English 6 and we have Blueprint C in English 7. I don't teach English 5 at moment ok. And we have Stepping Stone for the language introduction engelska grund… And all of these are structured in the way, especially Shortcuts and... and this Stepping stone... in a way that different chapters are about different... countries and different varieties of English language. So our texts are from like I said, from Dublin we have Dublin and the Liffey there and the Wales and…

A: So to teach cultural or intercultural competence you use text books?

S: That too, yes.

A: And other materials? What kind of materials?

S: Yes… the recording you see are then made by the people speaking or... speaking that variety of English, for example if the chapter if about Wales, it's Welsh variety... dialect of English of course it's not the Welsh language this. Bad example, South African... And then you have the South African accent on the person reading. So they get to hear the different varieties. also familiarize themselves there... and then because that comes again on the listening test, the national tests.
A: Ok, different varieties.

S: Mm. Yes. Also it was Scottish and it was really hard.

A: I can imagine.

S: Yeah, it was terrible. Well, beautiful but still, we did not understand... Ok so course books yes and also I use the asset that knowledge and experiences of the students constitute.

A: Do you use that also?

S: Yes yes, why not use when it's all there.

A: Yes.

S: Why should I invent something. When it's already there, yeah.

A: I would like to read a few lines from the curriculum if you don't mind.

S: Yes.

A: I don't know if you are familiar with this document, kommentarmaterial till kursplaner i Engelska.

S: Jag har läst här men jag kan läsa det igen.

A: It says that: “Students should be given the opportunity to develop knowledge of living conditions, social issues and cultural features in different contexts and parts of the world where English is used. Teaching should encourage students' curiosity in language and culture, and give them the opportunity to develop plurilingualism where skills in different languages interact and support each other.”

Moreover, the commentary suplement for the curriculum (Kommentarmaterial till

These few lines here mention the intercultural aspects.

S: Sociala, interkulturella

A: Or as it says interkulturell. So what is your understanding of this part of the curriculum?

S: Aha, now I understand that it's a wider concept than I... Ok, ok. That to. Ok. So intercultural is also different social situations. Definitely, we are here aiming for, since this is a preparing... this is a theoretical program that is preparing for university more or less... *pause*... So we try to give them the academic language and the way we write reports etc. They write different genres, also when speaking of course... I tell them that even if their subject matter the topic is sort of lightweight film for example. Maybe you can think, oh a film is fine, you know film time but ok. You can analyse a film but do it in an academic way. So say... view the film as a text... in itself... or a piece, work of art or whatever. So ... we work with different genres, we do that a lot. Last term they did a writing reasoning essay when they got an article about helicopter parents, for college students... And... reasoning essay that utredande uppsatts. For example, and then we do... I mean poetry, poetry and song lyrics, for example we do rhyming there. So we try to give them... Since the everyday... you know language they have already so what we can add, give them, is more academic side of things.

A: Something that is different that they are used to?

S: That's right. And literature.
A: Yes... Is teaching intercultural competence or culture a part of your planning or is it a spontaneous activity in your classroom?

S: Both.

A: It's both.

S: It's both, when it comes to language introduction it's... and also it's different for different groups. My experience is that it's good to have an overall plan so you know how much time you have you know. You look at the week the schedule and see if there are... any days that there are sports day or something so you know how much time do we have ok. And it's good to have an overall plan, a sort of preliminary plan. But then things sometimes happen along the way, and it could be serendipity it could be good things also... So I... yes it's part of my planning in the sense that we do this like I said, present an English speaking country for example. That's planned and also the different genres that they are writing that's planned. We do that, we have an English conference, this afternoon, after this.

A: Oh, if I could come there (laugh).

S: Anyway. So we decide together as a group the English teachers, we have some things in common, for grade... For English 6 and for English 5 we have, we plan a couple of listening and reading tests for the autumn term. And also writing, but then they have a national test coming up soon so that is enough for them... for things that we do the same. Plan together... But for English 7 we do not have national tests, we arrange more than that, it will be three listening tests this term. I had one already. And one reading and one writing about an article again. So this is planned, it's all planned, that's different.... writing in different genres and reading also, speaking... Yes, so that's planned, some things are planned and in language introduction it's a little bit different. It's planned there also and as I said their course book is structured that way... But then it depends on the material, meaning students that I get, so how it. But usually... I do have it planned. That they should somehow present themselves to the extent that they want to. I feel, you know, the atmosphere in the room etc. and see… So we can share, I try to create a climate of sharing.
A: Mm. There is… that covers a bit of the next question. How do you design your lessons to implement the curriculum requirements with regards to intercultural competence? Could you give me some examples of… what kind of lessons… lesson design, how is it designed to teach intercultural competence or culture with regards to the curriculum as it says here?

S: I understand; I think…. Think of examples, think of examples now, I should have thought of this before (long pause). Well it… All the time this language introduction comes to mind but I should talk about other groups in my regular, English 6 and 7. Well I gave you an example with this... How I first meet the language introduction students. We grade them you see, we put them in different groups according to their level, their knowledge of English ok. Which I mean diagnostic test, they take a diagnostic test first and then we have four groups. Ok, so... now I got two students from ******s group who thought it was too easy there that wanted to move up. She thought they would make it so, for example that also happens. That group composition changes sometimes. Which it doesn't do in my other groups to the same extent at all... Anyways, but I did.... I have them write their name on the board, or even... I ask them to spell their name so I can write it, that way I learn to, plus they get to show me if they know the alphabet. So I usually start from there then it can take different directions a little bit but get into that” do you know what your name means?” you know and then we get into that lang. What is your mother tongue? I ask for their name if they know what it means if anything and their mother tongue, what is your language? And anything else that they want to share, you know.

A: So you go from basics and you develop from that.

S: Yeah, yes, yes. Because then you don't scare them. I try to create a climate of acceptance and sharing. That's the main idea. That's the main idea... So example, that's an example. Then we get a lot of... and also of course when we. We have also studied literature. classics, both English 6 and English 7. And they choose, especially in English 7, in English 6 I sort of focused on Victorian, British... But in English 7 they could choose more freely but it should be classic though.

A: It should be classic, ok it's mostly classic.
S: yes but it could be something more contemporary also but... no... classics, it was classics actually. So then we had of course Mark Twain, Huckleberry Finn there, everything from that to Mary Shelly’s Frankenstein and... you know. And in that sense then we have sometimes a choice of movies, Jane Eyre, Oliver Twist... then we get into the old... English landscape, different environments and the language, Dickens language. It's fantastic, you know.

A: Also I would like to know if you find any difficulties in teaching intercultural competence or teaching culture. Are there any difficulties?

S: Well I don't see why it should be in particular difficulties?

A: For example, in assessing?

S: Aaaah

A: For example, do you find it difficult to assess knowledge of culture?

S: Aha, ok, ok. Well... Not really no. I have assessed so many, many, many, many essays over the years. I've been a teacher for over 25 years (laugh). Yes. Well, I haven’t been teaching all the time. I have four children and I also studied. English I studied later, so there was a gap when I studied English. First I was a teacher of just business economy. Ok. It's been a long time, different schools... Also adults, vux a short while. Anyway, so difficulties in teaching just culture. Well, I am so very much into culture myself.

A: So you don't find that difficult?

S: No. If you mean culture in a broader senses, such as this of course there could be... no... But we do things like for example when they do presentations about countries. An English speaking country. Or their own country etc. Then of course, then I have material for essays, sometimes I have them read paper also. I mean... so I, I, I... and then one quickly realizes if someone has just done the copy paste thing or if they really really do some work, and gained some knowledge. Because if somebody is reading dadadada...
and they can't even pronounce the words in the paper then I go” why did you write that if you can't?”. Then they see that ok. When somebody is talking in a way that shows insight and knowledge that... I notice that. Sorry I'm a bit tired now.

A: Yes, I understand.

S: No but difficulties I don't know... Assessing, of course... all the time when you get into, also following, going with the flow so to speak like I told you about in this language introduction group, it can be very different in different groups also in my other classes but maybe not to the same extent, every group is different. It's constellation. As soon as you get into this more open minded thing and going with the flow and see where it's leads you, but of course gotta have an overall plan otherwise it's just... the captain. But still, of course that is making it easier for... of course it's easier to all the time just give glossary test or you know... or multiple choice questions so as soon as you get into this qualitative thing it's of course… It's more demanding.

A: Yes.

S: For the teaching. But the other solution, to make is so boring and so, without life you wouldn't get into it. You gotta have that too, you gotta have the structure test, of course I have that but... but still.

A: Do you think it's difficult to choose cultural aspects you would like to teach about? Or is it something like you said you would definitely teach about literature in in Victorian times for example. Do you usually? Do you use different kind of culture, not just as mainstream but do you search for some other material not just...?

S: Yes, yes... Absolutely and we do it together the English teachers also. Of course as I said we are having a conference now.

A: And you usually decide in the group?

S: Yes, we decide in the group and if there is money we will have our own budget from next year, or if we have it already. Don't remember but still. So if there is money we
decide what books would we like to, novels for example would we like to buy etc. And .. So that's good because we get a variety... I'm very much into this, like I told you... British literature but also American literature. But somebody else is completely into something different. There was this white tiger for example. Indian right? Indian writer. And then we have... and... even African… Yes, we have... but that is a white South African though as I could. Boyhood we have for example. So we have novels from different countries. English speaking countries usually, we do. And we decide that together. So there is something for every taste. But now you gave me an idea, I should try something new (laughing). Also for me it's more like, not that difficult but maybe I should look at completely other kinds of books that I wouldn't chose myself. That wouldn't be my first choice but maybe give it a chance. Good idea.

A: That was all from me but would you like to add something about what we have just discussed? About intercultural competence and this…

S: Nothing that I can think of the top of my head.

A: Ok. Thank you very much.

S: Thank you. You are welcome.

Interview 2 – Jonas

A: Yes, the purpose of my research is to examine teachers’ perception of culture and intercultural competence in teaching English. Are you familiar with the concept of intercultural competence?

S: I would say I probably am familiar with the concept but I don't think I have ever used the term to be honest.

A: Ok, what you understand by the concept of intercultural competence?

S: My understanding of intercultural competence would be the ability to adapt to a certain cultural context. And what I mean by that is being able to predict how another person
from a difference cultural context will react to things I say and ways I think. And manners in which I present myself.

A: According to English curriculum for upper secondary “Students should be given the opportunity to develop knowledge of living conditions, social issues and cultural features in different contexts and parts of the world where English is used. Teaching should encourage students' curiosity in language and culture, and give them the opportunity to develop plurilingualism where skills in different languages interact and support each other.” (Skolverket, 2011)

Moreover, the commentary suplement for the curriculum (Kommentarmaterial till kursplanen i engelska) says: “Undervisningen i engelska ska ge eleverna möjlighet att utveckla en allsidig kommunikativ förmåga. I en sådan förmåga ingår såväl sociala som interkulturella och språkliga aspekter. De sociala och interkulturella aspekterna innebär att man kan anpassa sitt språk till olika situationer, syften och mottagare. I en social och interkulturell förmåga ingår att så långt som möjligt känna till och använda de kulturella koder och det språkbruk som behövs för att kunna kommunicera i både formella och informella situationer. Det kan handla om ordval, språkmarkörer för artighet, hur jag inleder ett brev eller mejl, hur jag uppträder i olika sammanhang eller tackar och säger nej.”

What is your understanding of this part of the curriculum? What does it mean for your teaching?

S: So this is my understanding of the passages I would say is something along the lines of what I scoped out earlier, being able to predict how a certain person from a certain cultural context will react to me and the way I might adapt to make them react in a certain way. I tend to I think interpret culture a bit wider or a bit abstract than at least the commentary section here because that is quite specific isn't it? Which codes do you use in England? Which codes do you use in India? Which codes do you use in Hong Kong? And so forth… I tend to focus more I think on where these codes come from in what way does a British person think differently from an American person for instance in my teaching, and the reason I do this is because my students are mostly adults so they have quite a, are familiar with certain ways of greeting one another and being respectful to other cultures and so forth. They are a lot of experience as well, since they have all this experience it feels more interesting for me, basically as a teacher to try to look at their
experiences and try to map out where does this experience come from and this has the added bonus I think of interlogging quite nicely with subjects like history for instance and religion. And also it's, since it is more abstract it also works for non-English speakers of course. Instead of looking at, how do you greet someone in America, you look at how do Americans think, what values do they have. And that feels really appropriate at a time like this when we have the presidential campaign going on in America and from a Swedish perspective to have a candidate as Donald Trump is quite surprising, maybe. And for him to be doing so well is also surprising. And then to be able to go into the American psyche and look at what ways do they think, in what ways do they think, why do they do that. That is interesting to me.

A: Is teaching intercultural competence part of your planning or is it a spontaneous activity during a lesson? You said something about certain context, is it something that you are picking up from your classroom, what is going on in your classroom and you are just taking the situation and then you work with it? But is it also that you plan or?

S: I would say that is different from year to year. If I have a class where these sort of things come up naturally and I don't have to plan it. It just happens but if I notice half way through a semester that this class is not responding to, or not spontaneous then I have to plan it. Sometimes we have used, quite a few years we took the entire class and went to England for a few weeks. And that, well part of the purpose was of course to show them how English speaking persons or specifically people in England think, how you interact in England. And that was very beneficial I think. It was a much better lesson than I could have ever done and of course that was planned but of course, we planned to give them the opportunity to discover. We did not show them specifically, this is the way English people think, they had to find out for themselves and I thought that was a neat idea.

A: Do you use textbooks or other materials for teaching intercultural competence in your classroom practice?

S: I have never used a textbook for this purpose I think. I

A: Why is it so?
S: I don't think I have found good textbooks, or textbooks with a good content but on the other hand I do not research textbooks that often. I use them not very much. I tend to use more internet resources... Actually a few years ago I had quite a large context you might call it, where we studied culture, it was called culture studies. I found this culture studies module by this guy called Hofstadter which had been researching lots and lots of difference countries and looking at it from different axis I may call it. Whether the citizens of this countries would expect to be able to influence public policy whether they plan for the future, whether they tend to look at people as individuals or collectives and so forth. We used that model to practice analysis foremost. But what we did was we looked at few movies from America, few movies from England, from different parts of

A: From English speaking countries?

S: Yeah, mostly because that is easier but some Swedish ones as well. I think we looked at Mumin for instance and try to find this axis in these movies. So that is one thing that I have done. I tend to use you know the World Value Survey. Do you know what it is?

A: It rings a bell but I am not sure, what is it?

S: It is a sort of great survey sent out to lots and lots of people in different parts of the world and what they look at is whether a country values survival or self-expression, for instance and it looks at whether a country has traditional values or more secular rational values. And each year they do this map where they plot out where countries are and it's a little bit interesting to see that most extreme secular rational self-expression value country is Sweden and it is also quite interesting to find that countries that are English speaking are sort of at the same place at this graph. Catholic are at the same as well, protestant Europe, far right Islamic world very much down to the left. Africa as well. And I try to show my students this because it highlights that people in different parts of the world think differently. So we connect back to the culture.

A: It's a very nice graph, it shows very quickly where we are and...

S: Exactly. I tried to find Poland but I could not find it.
A: Must be here somewhere but maybe they did not point it.

S: It might not be there, but yeah, probably around here somewhere. So that is always a good basis for discussion. And to get the students talking about what these values mean. What does self-expression mean and why do certain countries value survival for instance and why don't we? Well because we don't need to of course. Or we are pretty well off.

A: Then you don't only focus on the English speaking countries but the whole world?

S: Yes, the entire world.

A: (laugh)
S: (laugh) Yes this is the entire world, well the entire graph anyway. And I think it is quite interesting because I quite a few students from the Islamic world and from south Asia and so forth. From Africa. And it's a nice way to highlight that well people tend to think differently. All humans of course, we have different values and we are trained in different modes of thinking. So

A: That is a very good thing.

S: Yes, it is very useful.

A: I must take a picture of it.

S: Yeah sure.

A: How do you design your lessons to implement the curriculum requirements with regards to intercultural competence? What I mean by design a lesson. I would like to know the outline if, because you said something, its rather more spontaneous than planned. But if you plan a lesson where you want to, for example this lesson where you want to talk about cultural competence, how do you plan it, do you have some strategy there?

S: Sometimes I have a strategy. I think if you were to line up all the teachers in Sweden
based on how spontaneous their lessons are I am probably on the far spontaneous side. And since I have adult students that tends to work. Because I can always feed off what they are thinking about at the moment, often relevant, not always but often. But somethings that I have done is, I tend to do rather free sort of research assignments. For instance, I had a lesson this autumn where I used gap minder, which is a great online research. Do you know it?

A: Yes.

S: And I just basically show them how to use the tool and ask them to try to find something interesting here and a lot of people did of course. And could see that from a socio-economic perspective things are very different for different countries. And trying to connect that in a discussion later on to, well to the world values.

A: That is a little bit more about geography but you take it into the English lesson.

S: Yeah exactly, and I always think that if we are talking English it is ok to call it an English lesson.

A: Yeah, as long as you use the language?

S: Exactly, and also if you want to make it even more English you can focus on English speaking countries in this graph of course. And what you can find there is often sort of a cause of the different ways of thinking which I think is quite interesting.

A: Ok, is there something you would like to intercultural competence and teaching it and teaching English? Think about something I did not ask about and you want to add.

S: No I don't think so, not that I thought about (laugh)

A: Ok then thanks.

S: You are welcome.
Interview 3 – Rick

A: The purpose of this research is to examine how the teachers implement the curriculum requirements with regards to intercultural competence in their classroom practices. My first question is: Are you familiar with the concept intercultural competence?

S: Not as a concept no, but I mean just by going by words I'm guessing it has to do with basically teaching like the values of other cultures in regards to our students L1 which is Swedish I guess. So going beyond just trying to understand the concept no I'm not really that familiar with it. It’s not really something I have encountered in that many places no, especially not in a curriculum or anything.

A: So that covers actually the second question which was, what your understanding of the concept intercultural competence is. Would you like to add something more about it?

S: Beyond what I said as far as I understand it has to do with just teaching cultural values. I mean as far as I understand. Am I close or?

A: According to English curriculum for upper secondary “Students should be given the opportunity to develop knowledge of living conditions, social issues and cultural features in different contexts and parts of the world where English is used. Teaching should encourage students' curiosity in language and culture, and give them the opportunity to develop plurilingualism where skills in different languages interact and support each other.”

Moreover, the commentary supplement for the curriculum (Kommentarmaterial till kursplanen i engelska) says: “Undervisningen i engelska ska ge eleverna möjlighet att utveckla en allsidig kommunikativ förmåga. I en sådan förmåga ingår såväl sociala som interkulturella och språkliga aspekter. De sociala och interkulturella aspekterna innebär att man kan anpassa sitt språk till olika situationer, syften och mottagare. I en social och interkulturell förmåga ingår att så långt som möjligt känna till och använda de kulturella koder och det språkbruk som behövs för att kunna kommunicera i både formella och informella situationer. Det kan handla om ordval, språkmarkörer för artighet, hur jag inleder ett brev eller mejl, hur jag uppträder i olika sammanhang eller tackar och säger
What do you understand by this part of the curriculum and the commentary material?

S: I mean I will go for the curriculum first there it's very vague as the curriculum tends to be in general but it's says we should have knowledge of living conditions, social issues and cultural features but just by saying that they should develop this, this and this doesn't really mean that I as a teacher know what they mean by those things. Cause living conditions and especially social issues and cultural features are massive terms and just by going on those features, or those things I don't really know what specifically they mean or what specifically I am supposed to teach with regards to that it's big basically. And as I understand the commentary, even though they state things like interkulturella or intercultural and they talk about intercultural aspects and cultural codes. The thing in here that actually talks about like cultural codes and intercultural aspects or språkmarkörer för artighet cause otherwise its basically just uppträda i olika sammanhang because that is the focus here. So what they are focusing on, even though they are mentioning intercultural aspects they are really only talking about that you should tell your students to react this way in an academic setting, this way in an informal setting, this way when you are talking to like a teacher or a friend, a parent a job interview, whatever. The only real thing that talks about, or as I think relates to intercultural is when they talk about språkmarkörer för artighet because in the real world we are limited by time that we have, btw is this for English 6 or English in general… cause we, English is a core part of the upper secondary curriculum but in reality there is so much that needs to be done so you can't really teach your student how to deal with intercultural aspects the way they talk about here which I mean as språkmarkörer för artighet because that itself is such a massive area. One way of talking to other cultures let’s say now people from Nigeria who speak English which might be radically different from Australians or. So my understanding of this part of the commentary is that they can't just throw out term or terminologies without further specifying it and it needs more specifying than saying that it could involve these things. If they actually are going to talk about intercultural abilities or aspects they need to be more specific and they need to be way more clear because the way they talk about it now is they come close to certain aspects but they just mention it among other things that they *incomprehensible* but if they are going to do this thing then focus more on it.

A: Okay. When you see this part of the curriculum, what does it mean for your teaching?
How would you apply this?

S: Honestly said this is such a small part of English course and there are so many other things that we need to put more focus on or just do, really. It does not really mean that much for my teaching if I express how it is now. Just reading this makes me think about this more but it does not really affect me in the way it probably should because I feel like I don't really have time to delve into intercultural competence in the way that they seem to want me to. Unfortunately, it does not really mean that much because I just don't have the time to go as in depth as they kind of want me to.

A: Okay. Is teaching intercultural competence as you understand the concept a part of your planning or is a spontaneous activity during the lesson?

S: The part of the intercultural competence I do teach is largely part of my planning. Cause the way the... I try to get in as much cultural and intercultural aspects, boy it's a hard word to say sometimes, is basically by doing weekly news quizzes and I try to involve news casts covering multiple parts of the world. That's kind of, I guess, my way of trying to include some intercultural aspects in my teaching. But of course there are also times when it just spontaneously happens but not nearly as often, or i just doesn't happen that much. So the teaching of intercultural competence I do is largely part of my planning but I kind of want to do it more but yeah...

A: Okay. Do you use text books or other materials to support teaching intercultural competence in your classroom practice?

S: I use text books and other material to fill out my lessons but not with regards to intercultural competence. The way I use text books are more related to grammar, related to reading tasks or listening tasks or discussion tasks. I use them as an easy format to construct some tasks when there is just fillers that needs to happen but not really in terms of intercultural competence because I find that, the way they try to implement intercultural aspects in text books is not really that good. Or rather, it’s not really bad it’s just very stereotypical and also text books tend to be out of date or at least they are five or more years old. When it comes to this sort of things, like being fresh or being up to date is kind of important. So no, I don't really use text books to teach intercultural
competence because I.

A: Do you meet any difficulties when it comes to teaching intercultural competence. Do you think it's difficult at some point?

S: That's a good question but since I don't really focus on it that much in my teaching there is not really that much to pose since the part of the intercultural competence I do involve, largely involve like global news. Of course there are like opposing opinions there but there is not that much to like oppose I guess.

A: How do you design your lessons to implement the curriculum requirements with regards to intercultural competence? Can you give me some example of how, what do you do in your classroom practice to implement it??

S: Well, I mean even though generally I do kind of, when I do my I guess term planning I do kind of check off like ok, ...should they learn this or be exposed to this? I do kind of check off. And that's, well I mean implement curriculum requirements with regards to intercultural competence since they are so big I largely fill them in like my new segments but for example I do have a task that they just did which is called a summer response paper where they choose a topic about an English speaking country where it could be for example human rights or child abuse. And then they themselves investigate about those topics using journal articles and stuff like that. So I mean, beyond so beyond the new segments I guess I try to at least make it a part of another big task but it's not the main focus I guess. So I don't design lessons like – ok this lesson I will teach about intercultural competence” it's more, this lesson we are going to do this and intercultural competence happens to be a part of this. So it's not specifically about intercultural competence, it's a part of something else.

A: Last question. When you studied teaching did you have any courses that touched upon the concept intercultural competence?

S: Some courses kind of touched upon it in different areas.

A: In what way?
S: Oh, it's been so long I don't remember all this, but they kind of talk about the importance recognizing differences within different Englishes. A particular course I had which was called, World Englishes. That course actually kind of dealt with it but that's the only one, and that was an elective, it was something that I personally chose. And it was more about how languages are built or evolve, and were more focused on the linguistic aspects, not the cultural aspects. But not a specific course just dedicated to intercultural aspects but rather a part of some other courses. Or involved specifically linguistic aspects. There are some cultures there of course but the focus was on linguistic aspects, not on culture.

A: That was my last question, would you like to add something?

S: I think that intercultural competence is something very important and, cause English is one place and English in another place can be rather rapidly different than... These differences are something that should be highlighted or at least should be like, we should pay attention to it and in that way I think one of the many things that needs to be changed about the current teacher education is that we need to learn a bit more about how both, what exactly intercultural competence is and also how to make like concrete examples of how to implement that in your teaching. Because as I said earlier the curriculum itself is just not enough. So we need further guidance of how to both approach the term and how to properly use it. That's all.

A: That's all, thank you.

S: Thank you very much.

** Interview 4 – Martin **

A: The purpose of my study is to examine how teachers implement the curriculum requirements for intercultural competence in their classroom practice. And my first question is: Are you familiar with the concept intercultural competence?
S: Yes, I'm slightly familiar with the concept, yes.

A: What do you understand by the concept of intercultural competence?

S: My understanding of the concept intercultural competence is that it is quite important to have an acknowledgement when it comes to people’s different cultures and variation and have an understanding for their background and their thoughts regarding the moral and ethical perspectives. That is my thought of the intercultural competence I would say.

A: According to English curriculum for upper secondary “Students should be given the opportunity to develop knowledge of living conditions, social issues and cultural features in different contexts and parts of the world where English is used. Teaching should encourage students' curiosity in language and culture, and give them the opportunity to develop plurilingualism where skills in different languages interact and support each other.”

Moreover, the commentary suplement for the curriculum (Kommentarmaterial till kursplanen i engelska) says: “Undervisningen i engelska ska ge eleverna möjlighet att utveckla en allsidig kommunikativ förmåga. I en sådan förmåga ingår såväl sociala som interkulturella och språkliga aspekter. De sociala och interkulturella aspekterna innebär att man kan anpassa sitt språk till olika situationer, syften och mottagare. I en social och interkulturell förmåga ingår att så långt som möjligt känna till och använda de kulturella koder och det språkbruk som behövs för att kunna kommunicera i både formella och informella situationer. Det kan handla om ordval, språkmärkörer för artighet, hur jag inleder ett brev eller mejl, hur jag uppträder i olika sammanhang eller tackar och säger nej.”

My question is what is your understanding of this part of the curriculum and the commentary material?

S: Well my understanding would be that it is quite important to expose students when you have … in upper secondary schools in general that it's quite important to give them the material that will give them the opportunity of understanding other cultures, understanding other feelings, understanding how to use a certain language in which context to be used in, so that's my vision of the whole thing I would say that it's quite important to give students sources and resources of course and the support of
understanding how language can differ from one another, how culture can differ from one another and all that and I think that's the responsibility of the teacher.

A: What does it mean for your teaching in the classroom, what does it mean this part of the curriculum? How would you implement it?

S: Well since I'm not a native speaker in Swedish it would mean the world for me actually because you know I'm familiarized with five languages. I'm born and raised in Asia, moved with my family to Sweden so for me it's fundamental for the students to have an acknowledgement of how people around the world function regarding cultures, traditions, the way of writing, the way of speaking, the way of behaving so I would say it's very important for me as a teacher.

A: Is teaching intercultural competence a part of your planning? Is it something you plan or is it a spontaneous activity that you do in class when you think it's important?

S: I would say that it's both. Sometimes well, well I will have it in my plans definitely. Even though that I’m not maybe discussing it in one period or another it can be brought up. It can definitely be brought up depending on the subject that we are studying, the subject that I'm giving the students. So that's, that would be my answer actually I do both. Both. Yes, yes, it's a part of my plans and that can also just be spontaneous in a classroom context because such things of culture variations and understanding other peoples' cultures in this society that we live in Sweden which is … it has so many different cultures, so many different people so I think it's something that you cannot just neglect in a way so it can all be... it can come spontaneous and it should be planned in every teachers lessons I think.

A: Give me some examples, if you could come up with some examples right now, what kind of plan, planning, what kind of lesson plan you would have when it comes to intercultural competence?

S: If we are talking domestically in Sweden I would say that having discussing the Christmas traditions for example that's something that everyone are familiarized with. We have people that maybe come from different religious beliefs and different countries and
they are not familiarized with the Christmas holidays and maybe that's a good thing to do, to tell them so they can understand and that way they will get an understanding of how different cultures work and since we are in this society, the Swedish society, I would say that it's quite important to let them know without making it to a religious thing rather than a traditional thing a cultural thing that they do. So that would be one example talking about the traditions as well as holidays in Sweden we talking' bout' midsummer, we are talking about you know… the national day what they call nationaldagen for example. So I think that would be an example we have examples about other aspects of… maybe if we have a lesson in hemkunskap for example where students can learn how different cultures and food function. That is also another thing that you can implement cultural inputs in the Swedish schools today. Like in the Middle East they like spicy food, something that's quite popular, that's also something that you could implement in hemkunskapsundervisning for example. Now I am saying hemkunskapsundersvisning because I don't know the correct term in English but I hope that you understand what I am trying to say.

A: Yes! Ok, do you use text books or other materials to support teaching intercultural competence in your classroom practice?

S: Yeah, well, absolutely, if we go back to the example I gave you about Swedish traditions I mean everything is the text books also. It's mentioned rather if you want to focus on grammar, or if you want to focus on speaking, reading or writing. In the text books you have some chapters which actually include culture that's very clear. But I don't want to say that maybe... maybe it's exposing more about the Swedish culture itself than other cultures I would say but yes, defiantly.

A: And if you used some other material what would that be?

S: If I used other materials, what would that be? Other material could be… movies, we could have a lesson where I could show a Spanish movie or a French movie with subtitles into Swedish language of course... (long pause) ... in the English language of course. I'm sorry for that. That would be quite important also, actually to make the students do an activity where there are more of an audience rather than just writing or doing anything else. They are being exposed to something such as a Spanish or French movie which is
subtitled in English that is also a way to learn a new culture, a variation of it. So yeah I would say that's one material. Another material could be … from what I can think of is maybe internet sources, if we have an assignment about Greek mythology for example that's also … that's a big, big aspect in for example history subject. You need to learn things about Rome and the Greek mythology, the Viking and all of that so. Internet could be a very useful material to be used in this case.

A: How do you design your lesson to implement the curriculum requirements with regards to intercultural competence? Could you provide me with an example of how you design a lesson? At which point do you think about intercultural competence?

S: Well, when I design my lessons, if I focus only on intercultural competence I would say that if I design a lesson it's very good that I display questions for me and for the students before exposing them to the cultural changes. And questions after when I've done this activity So it would be rather asking a question for the students before the actual activity and then after the activity itself asking another question so we could start a discussion and I think that would be a good … method to do in order of designing a lesson under the circumstances of intercultural competence that … The student will have learned something after the lesson has finished. So this would not just be an activity that they did and then 30 minutes later after the activity, the lesson, everything is just gone. You know it's erased from their heads. That is why I think it's important when I plan my activity … I tell them why it's important to watch this movie for example. That's about French history or whatever it is. So questions before activity, questions after the activity in order to sample a discussion and for the students to have the knowledge after it's done.

A: Mm. Thank you. I would like to ask you if you meet any difficulties when it comes to implement curriculum requirements when it comes to cultural and intercultural competence.

S: I meet many difficulties into implementing but it's not... I wouldn't blame the curriculum for that. I would blame actually I don't want to say blame but, my teacher colleagues, lack of motivation for the students for example, you can have students that don't understand why they have been exposed to a certain cultural aspect. To be quite concrete a student can raise his hand or her hand and say – why should we learn about
French history, it's not important for me you know? It has nothing to do with me at all”. So it's really important to make them understand why they are doing this task and difficulties can come from your teacher colleagues, to students, to parents to everyone involved in the actual curriculum. So I would say yes I face many difficulties and I provided for you examples of that but it doesn't mean that it's not manageable. It's all about how you process these kinds of things and how you … work in spite of that.

A: Ok. When you studied teaching, did you have any courses in intercultural competence, about teaching intercultural competence when you teach English?

S: To my recollection there is nothing that I can come up with right now but something that I have been exposed to throughout my entire educational program is that in the curriculum, we have been working a lot with the curriculum and as you read it out loud for me there quite a big passage where they mention the cultural aspects and the cultural variation so I have been exposed to that, definitely. But one specific course, not to my recollection no.

A: Ok thank you very much.

**Interview 5 – Caroline**

A: You got an information about my research project. I sent you an e-mail with a description and the purpose of my research is to examine teachers’ perception of culture and intercultural competence in teaching English. My first question is: Are you familiar with the concept intercultural competence?

S: I am yes. But my interpretation is very much colored by the curriculum and the three courses I teach.

A: What is your understanding of this concept?

S: It is the ability for our pupils to vary, according to their acquired context, their written and spoken English... And... To be able to know beforehand which one to use or which
ones to switch to so to speak... And therefore their also, the ability to interpret a certain context or a situation. So I guess that is part of my task to help them. To do that.

A: If you don't mind I will read a few lines from the curriculum for upper secondary. According to English curriculum for upper secondary “Students should be given the opportunity to develop knowledge of living conditions, social issues and cultural features in different contexts and parts of the world where English is used. Teaching should encourage students' curiosity in language and culture, and give them the opportunity to develop plurilingualism where skills in different languages interact and support each other.”

Moreover, the commentary supplement for the curriculum (Kommentarmaterial till kursplanen i engelska) says: “Undervisningen i engelska ska ge eleverna möjlighet att utveckla en allsidig kommunikativ förmåga. I en sådan förmåga ingår såväl sociala som interkulturella och språkliga aspekter. De sociala och interkulturella aspekterna innebär att man kan anpassa sitt språk till olika situationer, syften och mottagare. I en social och interkulturell förmåga ingår att så långt som möjligt känna till och använda de kulturella koder och det språkbruk som behövs för att kunna kommunicera i både formella och informella situationer. Det kan handla om ordval, språkmarkörer för artighet, hur jag inleder ett brev eller mejl, hur jag uppträder i olika sammanhang eller tackar och säger nej.”

What is your understanding of this part of the curriculum and the commentary material and what does it mean for your teaching?

S: Well my understanding of it is that I'm supposed to teach them various ways of expressing themselves in English and also what it sounds like in various cultures while *incomprehensible* as easy methods as listening to news from South Africa, some news with and Indian accent. Maybe listen to somebody who speaks with an Australian accent and so on and so forth... And, I don't know if you want me to give you examples?

A: Yes.

S: I brought a couple of things that I have been working with. And this year I have been teaching courses English 6 and 7 or I have *incomprehensible* … And this is what we
did in … my, one of my, one of my courses in the second grade. We read short stories, one is from Sri Lanka, this one, and it's gives a good insight into family values and how, for instance, age helps people gaining respect and how... young children are taught to respect whatever it is by older people. But also how family gatherings actually happen. So ... and also somewhere, some ways of speaking that might not be like natural for people in Sweden. The second was, is from Australia, there is one from Britain and one from America, so it doesn't cover all aspects of English but it's just a small selection. Apart from their course book which has a number of text from a lot of English speaking countries we also try to listen to different accents. So that's the intercultural competence in brief. And I don't know if you are interested in how I teach formal, informal English?

A: Yes.

S: But we just had a test essay writing when you just came. They have just finished writing a test essay to prepare for the national test essay and they need to know the difference between an argumentative and a reasoning essay... They need to know how to structure an essay they need to know that they themselves are responsible to plan, carry out and also read through whatever they have written before they turn it in. So therefore we have practiced a little bit of linking. Ways to put your arguments, do you start with your strongest? Is the strongest argument the one you end your essay with? How do I deal with counter arguments and so on; so we have actually talked quite a lot and worked with it in a number of ways. We have looked at differences between formal and informal language. If we stick to the second graders, it's not as crucial in their knowledge requirements as it is for those who are in the third grade ... But they still need to know... something about the difference between being nuanced and being varied, and also, what this actually means in practice. You have to show pupils what it looks like when somebody has written an essay that has been given this grade. And if you want a high grade what you have to do to improve and so on. And what does an ideal “A” essay look like, and there can be a number of answers and how do you actually do to be nuanced. That can also be done not only in the language you use but also in the aspects you look at. So you always have to give them examples. This means very little if you didn't equip your pupils with examples, so that's how I try to work. And very often I use previous students’ essays to give examples, yeah. Because we have some commentary material from the national school board, from Skolverket ... But sometimes you want to show other things, other ways of
being, yeah very good at English more or less. Now we are only on your second question. I don't know maybe we have included some of.

A: Yes, we have, perhaps we have done that.

S: Ah yes, number 4 and number 5 I would say that if I would answer number 5 it's definitely very much part of what I plan. So it's not spontaneous, I would say it's definitely part of the courses. So it's not spontaneous, sometimes of course if we have just a two-minute flash from BBC News of course there can be spontaneous comments, yeah. So I mean both of course.

A: But rather planned.

S: I think if you want something out of it you need to plan it. So that is my way of looking at it.

A: Do you use text books or other material to support teaching intercultural competence in your classroom practice?

S: I don't know if you wanna have a look?

A: Yes.

S: This is terribly old but it's still, it functions in some ways ... Looking at the difference between old and new English then it's excellent cause it has excerpts from the classic writings ... I don't know how much stays but I mean William Shakespeare cannot be removed from the curriculum so of course they need to know a little bit about what this language sounds like, maybe that is not part of intercultural but it's part of having like the literary code maybe. And … and I mean when we look at this kind of text we cannot do it without having prepared ... like ... The literary approach to a text, you need to know what a metaphor and similes, you need to know ... various narrating techniques and so on. That was also dealt with short stories of course. We have ... That's of course something else than in the … cultural aspects in terms of the difference between an Indian accent and an Australian accent, there, that's something else.
A: How do you ... What kind of other material do you use if you would like to complement this textbook?

S: A lot of internet material, is there anything in particular you are asking?

A: No, but maybe some example if you could come up with something?

S: Very often you can find readings or ... part of plays on YouTube that is actually pretty used and carried out by native speakers. That's an excellent source because there is so much ... and in another course, another class we read” Looking for Alaska” and John Green actually reads the first chapter. And we have looked at some of his talks, he gives ... he and his brother has video logs, I guess you are familiar with John Green?

A: No.

S: No, then that's American English but of course they get a lot of ... they make a lot of references to the American society so in that way, I mean that is just one example and it's like THE culture that they get most influenced by. Still it's very good to listen to a Native American, instead of listening to me.

A: Ok. How do you design your lessons to implement the curriculum requirements? You have answered this question a little bit but... can you give me an example of how your lesson is structured when it comes to, when you teach intercultural competence or culture? Is there some structure, some particular structure you have or topics?

S: Maybe if we talk about reading, we read “The White Tiger” which is an Indian story, written by an Indian writer... And then we actually had a close up on just a part of the course... a part of the text. Where I have taken out a couple of words that are related to the caste system, and that's ... and we talked a little bit about this and their understanding of how it works and what the book says about it and how it is affecting the characters in the book... So maybe it boils down to being prepared as a teacher but also helping the pupils understand various ways of ... but that's not in the language that is in the culture, the caste system has nothing to do with the English language, it has to do with Indian
culture but of course there were words that weren't actually translated in the book but words that were very specific for the Indian society that had to be talked about and explained in order for us to understand the whole story and parts of what was affecting the characters in the book. Especially the main character. So that's one way of planning a lesson. If we interpret cultural, or intercultural competence to formal vs informal English I think that I brought an exercise that I do with English 7 pupils. Yeah, I don't know, is this part of or is this outside, is this off topic?

A: No, no.

S: Because this is a really good example of how to help peoples improving their English in terms of how to transfer rather informal and talkative English into more formal English. And we have looked a lot about ... we have looked a lot at spoken English and what it looks like in an average blog, or an average informal text. And then the requirements for a formal text is that there are a number of nouns, a number of adjectives to support this nouns, and that all clauses, not only sentences, but also the clauses are rather efficient. And this is a very practical exercise where they are asked to remove verbs, simple verbs ... or to limit them so that they actually turn into more efficient sentences, and the students are encouraged to use adjectives instead, adjectives that support the nouns. So this is a very difficult but also challenging task so... pupils who are sincerely in improving their language they like this. And then we are doing as it's done in research as well. We count the average number of verbs per... I don't know... per one hundred words. And the one with the lowest percentage wins, so you can make it into a competition, make them a bit motivated. So that's just an example, but that's how you can also work with being more formal.

A: Do you find any difficulties with teaching intercultural competence, or culture as such?

Pause

S: Yeah, it is related to motivation I would say. The, the ... If a pupil is not motivated to go on with further studies it's difficult to teach them ... or teach them ... to make the understand the relevance of using a reference system for instances, we are writing essays with sources. And we have boiled it down to an essay with one source. We still want them
to use the Harvard system... And that is really difficult for some pupils, especially if the
text, the source that they are supposed to use in the essay, in the essay exam, features
other experts, researchers, people who are interviewed in the text that they are using as a
source. They tend to be really confused. But if, if, if you have highly motivated students
you can teach them basically anything.

A: One more question. When you studied English, did you have any course that touched
upon the concept of intercultural competence or how did you come across this concept?

S: I was lucky enough, I don't know if that applies to you as well, but when I attended the
teacher training college then the last part of becoming an English teacher they sent us all
abroad for one semester so I studied one semester in Northern Ireland which gave me
personally a lot. We very much focused, were more focused, on academic English I guess
than intercultural competence, and then there were a variety of courses you could choose
when you studied literature. I chose one with, that dealt with American writers, and then
one with 19th century female British writers so my perspective is very Eurocentric, a bit
boring, still that is what I was most interested in at that time. I don't remember, I took my
exam 1997 and I didn't check it up but we read a lot of literature from, by
*incomprehensible* so we have touched upon various cultural, or various cultures in
English speaking countries.

A: Mostly through the literature or?

S: Yeah I would say so.

A: Ok. Do you have anything to add to this conversation?

S: Not really. I am thinking, yeah I could have that in our school. I think we used to have
more lessons per course. So if there had been more time one could definitely use and
focus a lot more on varieties and different cultures in English. But I'm thinking that, at
the moment the pupils at our school, are not top notch students so we have to focus a lot
in preparing them for, not only the national test but helping them to pass the courses so it
actually, there are a lot of actors that actually affect what we are doing in our classrooms.
A: Thank you very much.

**Interview 6 – Ove**

(The first question was not recorded because of the technical problems)

A: Jag är intresserad av ditt perspektiv.

allmänhet, eleverna, vansinnigt dåliga rent i engelska. Om man säger så här. Dom som
går ut Engelska 5 på gymnasiet med medelbetyg C i engelska. Dom hade på 70-talet
nionde årskursen, kanske haft 2. Alltså nivån har ju sjunkit lite.

A: Vad tror du att det beror på?

S: Ja... Jag vet inte vad det beror på och jag har inte tänkt spekulera heller, för det konstiga
är att dom har väl aldrig någonsin varit så utsatt för engelskt tal och text som dom är idag
med internet och alla spel dom spelar och all musik dom lyssnar i stort sett. Jag menar till
och med svensktoppen idag är ju mest bara engelskspråkiga låtar. Så att dom har ju
engelskan med sig så mycket men dom är jättedåliga på att använda språket.

A: Men menar du, när det gäller grammatik eller?

S: Ja både grammatiskt och ordförrådsmässigt, faktiskt är dom det. Jag frågar idag i
Engelska 6, men sade jag. Så kan du ju inte säga, vad betyder... however. ”Ja inte vet jag,
jag har aldrig sett ordet”, går i andra årskursen på gymnasiet... Så dilemmat är att jag
tycker att man måste ägna så mycket tid åt det här att, att få dem att överhuvudtaget klara
av att läsa en relativt hyfsat, enkel text. Ordförrådsmässigt enkel text, och sen öka på det
här ordförrådet, det är det man får jobba med. Öka på ordförrådet men även det formella
att dom faktiskt då kan använda dom där orden och uttrycka en tanke. Det är det jag ägnar
min tid åt som engelsklärare. Det är alltså att använda språket i sig och att förstå språket.

För dom säger att dom förstår så mycket för jag tittar på så mycket film. ”Ja vad tittar du
på för film” frågar man dom. Ja då tittar dom mest på actionfilmer där det är ungefär 42
repliker i hela filmen. Och det är fuck off, i princip består 40 av de här replikerna. Men
dom ser ju sällan filmer där det förs resonemang, eller man sitter och pratar, eller där man
kanske använder ironi gentemot varandra, ironi som vi vanliga, inte den här ironin som
de kör med i amerikanska actionfilmer, det här våldsbetonade. Så dom har ju svårt, dom
har relativt svårt att hänga med i ett vanligt samtal mellan två personer som förs på lite
över... knähöjd, alltså man kommer upp litegrann. Och det är ju där jag känner att jag som
engelsklärare är mer eller mindre tvungen att få dom att, för jag menar när de kom då till
de nationella proverna, ja då har de en intervju till exempel med en australiensare och
engelsman. Och när australiensaren pratar då förstår dom ingenting. Därför det låter inte
riktigt som det brukar låta när man, dom hör en lärobokstext. Det låter lite avvikande,
eller en indier, och så ska dom då säga, vad handlade den här indiern för någonting utifrån det dom då har pratat om. Då har han... då kanske han har varit någonstans och så skulle han köpa kryddor, och så nämns det fyra olika sorters kryddor, det har dom aldrig hört. Dom kan inte namn på en krydda. ska dom fара till England och så ska dom gå på speceriaffären och ska dom köpa någonting för att dom ska laga sin egen mat. Dom har ingen aning om, dom får stå där med ordbok, för att kolla. Så tror jag,.. att på den här vardagsnivån är dom ju urusla. Rent ut sagt, dom är jättedåliga. På vardagsengelska, för om man betänker vad folk i allmänhet pratar om när man träffas, man pratar om jobb och... Alltså... ja... där... och där, alltså det här med intercultural competence, jag lär dom ju lite... alltså vi läser ju om andra länder, vi läser ju om en massa engelskspråkiga länder. Just nu har vi, i min Engelska 6 har vi jobbat med flera engelskspråkiga länder som INTE... alltså... Före detta, alltså brittiska eller amerikanska kolonier. Alltså det finns ju mönster till exempel sådana här ögrupper. Dom har dom för det första aldrig hört talats om, dom här ögrupperna, och för det andra pratar dom engelska där. Alltså Tobago, där har dom ju världens första nationalpark faktiskt, grundat av britterna redan på 1700-talet. Som inte många vet, som fortfarande, merparten av ön är en nationalpark. Och där pratar man då engelska och så har man fått lyssna litegrann, hur låter det när dom här pratar engelska. Och det tar... när dom har lyssnat en stund och så har man berättat, ”ja men han pratar om det här”, och så lyssna efter... han kommer att prata om någonting som har med bilen och göra, vad säger han? Jaha, när dom då får reda på att det är bilen han prata om då börjar dom förstå. Så man får liksom, lotsa dom in i det här att försöka.. för engelska är ju inte bara ett språk, det är ju oherrans massa olika engelska språk som finns. Och just det här att dom är... dom är dåliga på att förstå faktiskt, både skriven, bättre på skriven text än på talad text.

A: Så det är bara den brittiska eller amerikanska engelskan?

S: Ja, framförallt amerikansk. De tycker ju att brittisk engelska är svår också, jag menar fär dom lyssna på jag menar Yorkshire så förstå dom ingenting. Jag hade det exemplet faktiskt i en annan klass häromdagen, vi lyssnade på en liten hörförståelse, det var en diskussion mellan... En, det var en, han var... Den ena var jordbrukare med djurhållning och den andra var då en vegan som var emot djurhållning och så hade dom en diskussion om det här med pälsdjur och, ja köttframställning och sånt där. Och hon var australiensiska och han var från Yorkshire. Tjeh åifrén från Australien förstod dom bättre för

A: Dom är inte så vana.


A: Men när du läser den där, några meningar som finns från kursplanen. Jag kanske kan läsa..?

S: Ja men alltså, jag håller med om alltihop, det där gör ju jag att ”students should be given the opportunity to develop knowledge of ... etc.” Vilket ju nästan är hopplöst med tanke på att dom ägnar så lite tid åt att aktivt lära sig språket...

A: Men på vilket sätt använder du den där delen av kursplanen?

S: Ja det här... det här gör jag ju mycket, just det att man lyssnar på engelska från olika länder, olika kulturer och ... olika dialekter inte minst, jag menar det finns ju dialekter i USA också som är lika stor skillnad mellan, det är ju lika stor skillnad på dialekterna mellan låt oss säga New York och mid-western dialekt är ju enorm skillnad. Och kommer du ner i Louisana och dom trakterna så är det ju ett helt annat språk då. Så det är ju det jag gör mycket. Just det här att skapa förståelse för att språk inte... det finns inte bara ett språk. Det finns inte bara en engelska, lite, lite som det finns bara en svenska. Och det här är ju lustigt för att, att få dom att förstå det här är lättafore med många av invandrareleverna. Därför att dom har ju hört, när dom kommer till Sverige då reagerar dom ju ofta över att det är sån, att det låter så olika var man är i Sverige när folk pratar. Men våra elever, som

A: Nämen det är, det är väldigt intressant för jag har lite… Jag hade min praktik på en skola i Stockholm, på Danderyds gymnasium och dom var väldigt duktiga måste jag säga.

S: Är du engelsktalande alltså?


S: Från Polen ok. Mm.

A: Så jag var ganska förvånad faktiskt att de pratade så bra engelska.

S: De gjorde du?

A: Ah, dom gjorde det. Så det kanske beror på det, men…

S: Jo, men alltså det här ”Ska vi gå och dricka en kopp kaffe?”, det här oerhört enkla vardagen kan dom ju få ihop. Men jag som då har vårdlinjen, jag lägger ju inte… Jag läser ganska mycket medicinsk engelska.

A: Ja, just det.

A: Men då är det lättare om, för dom när dom har sådana kunskaper? Alltså vokabulär och sådant?

S: Ja, dom har den ju delvis på svenska, men problemet är ju då att engelska, den medicinska engelska är ju oerhört mycket latin. Alltså det är engelska är angiserade latinska ord. Som även i Sverige då används av läkarna men inte så mycket av den övriga sjukvårdspersonalen egentligen. Så att där har jag ju flera å... men då har det ju visat sig att dom blir ju inte bara bättre i engelska av det här. Faktiskt, dom blir duktigare på att kommunicera med folk. Utan dessutom blir det mycket bättre, de får bättre betyd i medicin därför att de får ju kunskaperna från två håll. Först får dom ju i medicin.

A: Ja det är två gånger.

S: Och sedan får dom det i engelska också, och så går dom där in i varandra. Och då är det mycket av de där latinska orden som de lär sig i medicin, dom kommer tillbaks i engelska. Så att det går hand i hand det där. Och det här har jag gjort i alla år som jag har undervisat på yrkeslinjer. Jag hade likadant när jag hade.. jag hade under många år när restaurangskolan hår började. Jag hade ju alltså kockar som gick ut här som kunde åka till England, få jobb på dom bästa krogarna, och visste vad varenda redskap i köket hette, och varenda krydda, varenda styckningsdetalj, och är inte bara på ko, utan på ko, på getter, och på grisar, och på får, och på, även på game, alltså på vilt. Så kunde dom, dom visste till exempel om dom skulle ha en baklägg från ett rådjur så visste dom vad det hette på engelska. För att det var det dom skulle laga där då, alla grönsaker kunde dom, alla kryddor... Och det var ju många av... under dom åren som jag var där och jobba så var det
massor av dom eleverna som fick fantastiskt fina jobb utomlands och sen kom tillbaks många av dom är ju toppkrögare idag. Och då, jag vet att ju har träffat många av dom här efteråt och dom sade det att jag hade ju aldrig farit iväg till Frankrike och sökt jobb på ett kök. Alltså franska är inte kökets språk, utan det är engelska sedan trettio år tillbaks alltså. Också jobba på ett fantastiskt bra franskt kök, där alla pratar engelska som dom kommunikerar på. ”Och jag förstår vad dom säger och jag kunde göra mig förstådd”. Det var något helt fantastiskt tyckte dom. Jag vet inte om det har med det här att göra men…

A: Jo men det är bra att veta? Men, det finns en annan fråga också. Is teaching intercultural competence a part of your planning or is it a spontaneous activity?

S: Both and. Både planera alltså och så sen... Jag... jag extemporiserar mycket, jag är mycket för det här att det dyker upp någonting. Någon ställer en fråga, och då har jag ju tack och lov varit med så länge så att jag kan ofta då göra någonting av det här som blir intressant även för dom andra. Men det tror jag kan vara svårt om man är 24.

A: Å, just det.

Till för en fem sex år sedan då jag bestämde att jag skulle börja undervisa litegrann på vintrarna igen så att. Då började jag om sår har jag nu dom sista två, tre, fyra åren kanske har jag jobbat heltid på vintern men jag har fortfarande jobbat hela sommaren med golf. Se jag har ju lite erfarenhet att ösa ur så att säga. Det kanske är lättare då att ta upp saker som eleverna säger om man har varit med ett tag. Det är väl lite så, men det är mycket så att jag planerar ju in det mest, men jag är inte sämre än att jag kan lägga det jag har planerat, flytta på det och så tar vi någonting som kommer upp därför att oftast är det ju så att dom där grejerna som kommer upp det blir de intresserade av och kör man då det på engelska så lär dom ju sig engelska i alla fall. Så kan man väl, det här man hade planerat, det kan man väl ta någon annan gång eller också stryker vi det, tar bort det och så tar vi någonting som är roligare, tycker dom.

A: Do you use text books or other materials?

S: Jag har alltid en lärobok som är på något sätt en röd tråd. Fast ibland kan ju den försvinna under fyra veckor. Också säller man, men alla har en lärobok, nu har jag dessutom en bra lärobok som heter pick and mix. Som innehåller då... alltså det finns... man får ju sälla, man kan ju inte köra en sådan där från början till slut utan man får ju sälla, man får ta bort mycket, och så får man ta dom delar som känns väsentliga för just den här klassen. Alltså det dom kan som står i den där läroboken det behöver man väl inte göra en gång till utan då tar vi sånt som jag märker att, ja men (incomprehensible) då kan vi ta kapitel fyra för att det handlar om... där är det mycket om just det här med ing-form till exempel, pågående, progressiv, då kör vi det stycket så kan vi ta det då för dom hade skrivit då, det var ju flera som hade gjort fel på det på sista uppsatsen dom skrev eller något sånt där. Så att jag har för att... det är så bra när eleverna... för då kan man så att säga ha alltid läroboken med er. Och då lär dom ju sig fort att den ska alltid vara med och då kan man ju säga att jamen, nu var det ju såhär att... dom här insändarna vi skrev, det var ju inge bra. Det finns ett kapitel längst bak i den här boken som handlar om hur man skriver en insändare till en engelsk tidning, då tar vi och jobbar med det. Då har... alla har materialet, jag tycker att man ska ha en lärobok för att det är... det är litegrann att luta sig mot. Och sen finns det ju då alltid elever som blir klara hemskt tidigt då kan man säga ”Jaha, gå och gör den här övningen som har med prepositioner o göra. Det är kapitel där och där”. Så att det är, ja jag tycker det är bra att ha en lärobok helt klart. Men det ska vara en bra lärobok, det finns många dåliga läroböcker. Men dom här är ju faktiskt riktigt
bra, och dessutom finns det då... allting finns inläst så man kan både... eleverna kan sitta med boken dom kan höra en engelsman läsa det här också kan man läsa glosorna också kan man lyssna på det igen också kan dom svara på frågor, också kan dom svara på mina frågor så får dom läsa själva. Det är behändigt när man slippery för att annars skulle jag själv måsta leta ett material, också skulle jag måsta kanske se om det fanns en ljudfil till den här och det är inte säkert att man hittar. Utan jag tycker det här är.. jag tycker det är bra att ha. Men som sagt dom är inget... det är ingenting som man bara gör utan man plockar in hemskt mycket material eller kompletterar, man läser ett stycke i den boken och så komplettera man det med en massa andra grejer som hör till samma sak men som man plockar utifrån. Det är bra att ha... alltså det är liksom... att ha en lärobok är att ha en game plan på något sätt. Också sen får man då komplettera den då och improvisera och plocka in och ta upp intressen som dyker upp eller sådant som jag själv kommer på att det här borde man göra därför att det skulle kunna komplettera det där vi har gjort och då hänger det liksom ihop. Men just att ha en... det blir på något sätt att ha ett skelett, lärobok är att ha ett skelett men människan består av mer än ett skelett sedan får man då plocka dit dom övriga delarna själv. Tycker jag.

A: Men tycker du att det finns några svårigheter med att lära ut intercultural competence?

S: Alltså det beror ju så mycket på hur man definierar uttrycket intercultural... för mig är det ju liksom att de ska lära sig språket, och så lära sig om.... ja dom ska både lära sig språket och engelskan är ju som sagt inte bara ett språk och då hänger det ju mer där att man måste läsa lite om andra länder och lite andra styressätt och historian skiljer ju sig så otroligt mycket åt om man tittar på till exempel gamla kolonier i.. gamla brittiska kolonier borta i Asien och varför vart det så, och hur har det funkat där och hur har det blivit sen. Det är också någon form av interkulturellt... Så vi har ju bland annat ett avsnitt som jag kör varje år som heter... ja, det finns flera olika sätt att göra på i år har jag, gjorde jag det som att ”I wish I were there”. Dom fick välja... dom skulle välja ett land som har engelska som officiellt språk men dom fick inte ta Storbritannien, USA, Australien och Kanada. Dom strök jag. Och då var det ganska intressant, första lektionen då var det massa av dom som kommenterade just det här ”Fan vad många länder det var som har engelska som språk. Och där borta”. Och så vart det diskussion: ”men alltså varför har dom engelska som officiellt språk”. Då får man ju på något sätt, det blir lite interkulturellt det där också. Och dom valde ju olika då, då fick dom välja om dom ville göra det ensam eller jobba två
och två så att det var valfritt. Men grejnen var att dom skulle lära sig litegrann om det här landet för dom sen gjorde tillsammans med någon eller ensam och sedan fick dom redovisa det både skriftligt och muntligt. Dom fick hålla en litet anförande. Nu gjorde jag i en klass, en annan klass, gjorde vi ett som hette ”Big cities” där dom fick då tänka sig tanken att dom skulle åka till en stor stad. En engelskspråkig stor stad och då gjorde jag samma sak där, jag tog bort alltså då Sydney, London, New york, och vad var det mer för stad jag tog bort, ja det var dom, det var dom jag tog bort. Också skulle dom välja en annan.. Och så skulle dom då berätta varför dom ville åka dit, vad dom skulle göra när dom var där, varför dom skulle göra det, vad dom då lärde sig av detta och så fick... då skulle dom kunna redovisa då också ”värd kostar det att gå ut och äta?” ”Vad åt dom för någonting då?” Och då skulle dom ju berätta vad maträtten hette och vad det ingick i den där maträtten. Vad man drack till och varför just den maträtten är så typisk för det området. Då blev det ju också då.. ja det blev mycket diskussion om konstig mat men det var ju intressant och... Ja.

A: Vilka bra tips jag får.

så ska dom då kunna ge en biografi då om kompositören och varför han eller hon eller dom har blivit så stora och berömda och så vidare. Då är det ju ofta också det här att dom grottar ner sig lite grann i det här landet och musiken det här som dom hitta. Och vet ju jag hittade, jag höll på med den här artisten och så hitta jag ett band som... inte speciellt kända men jag hitta igen dom på Facebook fanns dom och är ju jättebra. Också upptäcker dom andra kulturella värden än det dom har varit ute på jakt då från början också. Ja...

A: Men jag tror att jag har svar på alla frågor.

S: Det vet jag väl inte men.

A: Är det någonting du ville... något till du skulle vilja säga om just interkulturell kompetens?

S: Det är ju kul. Alltså jag lär mig ju själv nya saker hela tiden, alltså jag kan ju inte om dom frågar mig... något sånt där... Vad heter han Nevis and Saint Kitts, den där lilla ö- staten där i Karibien? Jag vet ingenting om dom alltså. Men man lär sig ju hela tiden å... Så att... Sen är jag väl... Jag är väl ganska spretig, jag tycker hemskt mycket, jag tycker hemskt mycket är kul. Fast jag har svårt det är att gå på djupet med någonting, jag har en doktorsavhandling som inte är klar. Ja det har jag lagt bort, jag fyller 68 i år så den blir aldrig klar så den blir bortsopad. Den orkar jag inte, den blir sådär ner på petitesser på allra minsta detalj tycker jag, det här breda tycker jag är kul... Ah, så är det.

A: Mmm. Tack så mycket.

S: Ja det var så lite så, det var så lite så.

A: Tack