

Foreign Language Teachers and the Intercultural Dimension in Primary Education

Olinka Breka¹ and Ana Petravić²

¹Faculty of Mechanical Engineering and Naval Architecture, University of Zagreb

²Faculty of Teacher Education, University of Zagreb

Abstract

The article presents the results of an investigation into the self-concepts primary school teachers of English hold regarding foreign language teaching objectives, culture teaching objectives, the possibility of developing intercultural competence in foreign language classes and their culture teaching practices. The aim was to establish to what extent the teachers comply with a newly conceptualised foreign language and intercultural competence teacher profile. The results have confirmed the teachers' positive disposition towards intercultural competence development. The results also reveal certain inconsistencies between the teachers' cognition and beliefs on the one hand and the teachers' self-perception of their culture teaching practices on the other. A number of implications arise from the results which might be relevant to further research on both teacher competences required for the development of intercultural competence in foreign language classes and foreign language teachers' initial education and professional development.

Key words: *development of intercultural competence in foreign language classes; foreign language and intercultural competence teacher profile; foreign language teaching and learning; intercultural competence.*

Introduction

Since modern societies are characterised by growing ethnic, cultural, linguistic and social diversity and increased, both direct and indirect, contacts between people and products of different cultural backgrounds, in the 1990s intercultural competence (IC) was recognised in glottodidactics and foreign language (FL) methodologies as a concept of essential relevance. Gradually communicative competence, commonly

viewed as a basic aim of FL teaching, has been expanded to encompass IC, so that today intercultural communicative competence is considered to be a global aim of FL learning and teaching (cf. e.g. Byram, 1997¹, 2009; Sercu, 2005; Coperías Aguilar, 2008). At the same time, the native speaker as a FL model has been replaced with an intercultural speaker (Byram, 1997; 2009; Zarate, 1997; Krumm, 2003; House, 2008), a person who can communicate “with people from cultures perceived as different from one’s own” (Krumm, 2003, p. 141).

Given a modified FL teaching objective, two issues need to be addressed. On the one hand, there is a question of competences a FL teacher needs to possess in order to appropriately and effectively integrate two distinct learning processes, i.e. mastering a new linguistic system and acquiring IC, both with the aim of helping students to become intercultural speakers. On the other hand, there is an issue of whether and to what degree FL teachers do possess the required competences and the question of teacher education that will enable them to fulfil such complex tasks.

Our primary concern here is the extent to which FL teachers correspond with a newly conceptualised FL&IC teacher profile. The findings of the study into English language teachers’ self-concepts about the possibility of IC development in Croatian primary school FL classroom will be presented as part of the answer to this question².

Theoretical Framework

To define the competences FL teachers need to have to effectively develop learner IC, first, the IC concept itself needs to be clearly defined. No clear consensus over IC exists (cf. e.g. Spitzberg & Chanson, 2009; Petravić, 2011). However, despite its limitations (cf. e.g. Byram, 2009; Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013), Byram’s (1997, 2009) conceptual framework of IC, which comprises five IC components, is most widely accepted in glottodidactics and FL teaching methodologies. Sercu (2005) later expanded this framework by adding new components and classifying the components as cognitive, affective and pragmatic dimensions (cf. Petravić, 2011). The cognitive dimension incorporates *knowledge* (*savoirs*) “of self and other” (Byram, 1997, p. 34) as well as the knowledge of individual and social interaction (Byram, 1997, p. 34). It also includes culture-general and culture-specific knowledge along with an insight into how culture affects language and communication (Sercu, 2005, p. 3). The affective dimension is composed of *attitudes* (*savoir être*) and *critical cultural awareness* (*savoir s’engager*). The former comprises the attitudes of “relativising self [and] valuing others” (Byram, 1997, p. 34), the attitudes of “openness and curiosity” (Byram, 1997, p. 35) and an inclination towards acquiring IC (Sercu, 2005, p. 3). The latter, on the other hand, entails an ability to critically evaluate the representations

¹ Byram (1997, p. 71) defines intercultural competence as an ability “to interact [effectively] with people from another country and culture in a foreign language.” It encompasses linguistic, sociolinguistic, discourse and intercultural competence (Byram, 1997, p. 73).

² Primary school in Croatia consists of two stages of obligatory primary education. The first stage comprises grades 1 to 4, while the second stage encompasses grades 5 to 8. The first foreign language is an obligatory subject, starting with grade 1. The second foreign language can be studied as an elective subject from grade 4 onwards.

of both one's own and other cultures (Byram, 1997, p. 53). The pragmatic dimension incorporates **skills of interpreting and relating** (*savoir comprendre*) and **skills of discovery and/or interacting** (*savoir apprendre/savoir faire*). The first category refers to the skills of interpreting documents or events from other cultures and relating them to the documents and events from one's own culture. The second category pertains to acquiring new cultural knowledge and the use of knowledge, attitudes and skills in intercultural communication and interaction (Byram, 1997, p. 52). It also implies "metacognitive strategies to direct own learning" (Sercu, 2005, p. 3).

To be able to help their learners to develop the above defined IC components, FL teachers should be equipped with specific knowledge, skills, beliefs and attitudes that go beyond the traditionally conceptualised FL teacher competences. Accordingly, Sercu (2005, 2006) refers to this new FL teacher profile as a *foreign language and intercultural competence (FL&IC) teacher*, the term we have adopted, too. Specific components of the FL&IC teacher profile are specified in the literature dealing with relevant IC teacher competences (cf. e.g. Kramsch, 2004; Sercu, 2005, 2006; Petravić, 2015) and in the sources concerned with FL teacher competences in general (cf. e.g. Kelly et al., 2004; Newby et al., 2007; Radišić et al., 2007). Generally, FL teacher competences that are related to IC can be categorised as teacher IC competences (I) and teacher competences required for the development of learner IC (II). Each of the above mentioned categories comprises a number of mutually intertwined competences relating to the cognitive (a), affective (b) and pragmatic dimension (c). Here, we will single out some particular competences. As for the cognitive dimension, the FL&IC teacher should possess culture-general knowledge, the knowledge of the target and the learner culture (Ia) and should know how learner IC can be developed (IIa). Regarding the affective factors, teachers should be willing to develop their own IC attitudes towards different cultures and their members involved in intercultural communication (Ib). In addition, they should be positively disposed towards integrating IC into FL teaching (IIb). In relation to the pragmatic dimension, FL&IC teachers should, among other competences be able to critically evaluate the level of their own IC and their own competences for promoting the development of learner IC (Ic). They should also be able to select and apply the appropriate strategies, techniques and activities aimed at the development and (self) evaluation of the cognitive, affective and pragmatic dimensions of learner IC, with a special emphasis placed on the integration of linguistic and intercultural learning (IIc)³.

Having such demanding requirements imposed on FL teachers, it is extremely important to know if FL teachers comply with the above described professional profile. In this paper, our interest will be focused on the following two aspects of the FL&IC teacher profile: a) teachers' attitudes, including their beliefs, towards the integration of IC in FL teaching, and b) their ability to select and employ teaching activities that foster the development of learner IC. The reasoning behind this research focus is twofold. On the one hand, teachers' attitudes and beliefs are relevant to their teaching practices (cf. e.g.

³ For a proposed systematisation of FL & IC teacher competences cf. Petravić (2015).

Borg, 2003; Sercu & St John, 2007), while, on the other hand, there is a constant need for verifying whether teaching practices, as seen by teachers, comply with their perceptions of FL teaching and learning. Furthermore, other studies into teachers' perception of the IC issues, showing certain inconsistencies between the two above mentioned levels (cf. e.g. Sercu et al., 2005; LACE⁴, 2007), confirm the relevance of this research problem.

Methods

The aim of the study was to determine whether Croatian primary school FL teachers of English comply with the envisaged FL & IC teacher profile. We investigated teachers' perceptions of the possibility of developing IC in the FL classroom with regard to the following parameters: FL teaching objectives, culture teaching objectives, teachers' beliefs about learner IC development and teachers' culture teaching practices. The research findings presented in this paper are part of a wider study examining English language teachers' perceptions and self-concepts regarding FL & IC teaching and learning (cf. Breka, 2012).⁵

A total of 105 Croatian primary school FL teachers of English, coming from different regions of the country, participated in the study. The majority of the teachers were female (92.2%). Most of them had between 5 and 20 years of teaching experience (60.5%), 18.3% of them were teaching for less than 5 years, while 21.2% of the participants had over 20 years of teaching experience. The development of teachers' IC was included in the initial education of 47.6% of the respondents, while only 27.6% of the teachers had the development of learners IC incorporated in their initial education. Regarding IC seminars and workshops, 69.0% of the teachers participated in them.

A specific questionnaire suited to the needs of this study was designed based on the questionnaires used in previous research (Sercu et al., 2005, LACE, 2007). The questionnaire was pilot-tested with a group of 15 primary school FL teachers and primary school English textbook writers. It was administered through teacher development meetings and electronic mail. Although a wider and more profound insight into teachers' perceptions and self-concepts concerning FL & IC teaching and learning could be obtained by combining the questionnaire with teacher interviews, we used the questionnaire as the principle means for gathering relevant data because of the specific circumstances in which the investigation was conducted.

Results and Discussion

Teachers' Perceptions of FL Teaching Objectives

The research problem of teachers' perception of FL teaching objectives was referred to with a set of 7 statements describing different FL teaching objectives in primary school.

⁴ LACE is an acronym for *Languages and Cultures in Europe*.

⁵ This study was part of complex research carried out to gain an insight into the possibility of developing IC in Croatian primary school FL classroom with regard to teachers, textbooks and relevant educational documents (Breka, 2012).

The teachers ranked their significance on a scale from 1 to 7 (1=most significant; 7=least significant). The comparison of mean values, representing here the average ranks, (see Table 1) shows that the linguistic competence, as part of communicative competence, is considered to be the most important FL teaching objective (M=1.96). Ranking IC as second (M=2.60) could mean that the teachers, although perhaps not aware that IC always incorporates communicative competence (Byram, 1997, p. 71), nevertheless, recognise its importance. With regard to the IC components, mean values show higher estimates of learners' interest in the language (M=3.09) and their curiosity and openness towards different cultures (M=4.33) than cultural knowledge (M=4.94). In other words, the teachers find the affective components more relevant than the cognitive ones, thus confirming they are generally aware that motivation and interest have a significant role in FL teaching and learning (cf. Mihaljević Djigunović, 1998). Surprisingly though, the least important objectives appear to be effective learning strategies (M=5.46) and critical thinking (M=5.64). These results contradict a didactic principle that promotes learner autonomy (cf. Elsen & St. John, 2007). Furthermore, they show that the teachers do not perceive the development of metacognitive learning strategies as an important aspect of IC either. Knowing that a teacher's task is not so much to teach learners about a foreign culture as it is to open up possibilities for them to gain insights into it (cf. Fenner, 1997), and critical thinking being another crucial component of IC, we might conclude that the teachers have not thoroughly grasped the concept of IC yet, i.e. they do not perceive it in its complexity shown in the theory section of this paper.

Table 1

Teachers' perceptions of FL teaching objectives

The objective of FL teaching is...	N	Min.	Max.	M*	SD
1. to promote learners' interest in the language they are learning, people who speak it and the country/countries in which it is spoken.	94	1	6	3.09	1.493
2. to promote learners' curiosity about and openness towards different cultures and worlds.	94	1	7	4.33	1.520
3. to develop linguistic competence.	94	1	6	1.96	1.351
4. help learners familiarise with the culture of the country/countries in which the language is spoken.	94	1	7	4.94	1.508
5. to develop intercultural competence, i.e. the ability to effectively communicate with the FL speakers/foreign culture representatives.	94	1	7	2.06	1.461
6. to develop critical thinking.	94	1	7	5.64	1.516
7. to develop effective learning strategies.	94	1	7	5.46	1.522

*M= average rank

Teachers' Perceptions of Culture Teaching Objectives

The next research question enquires into teachers' perceptions of culture teaching objectives. The teachers ranked 9 culture teaching objectives on a scale from 1 to 9 (1=most significant; 9=least significant). As can be seen from the average ranks (M) in Table 2, the teachers attached a highest importance to developing respect,

tolerance and empathy towards other cultures (M=3.19). They perceive the target culture knowledge, mainly pertaining to the civilisation issues, as almost equally relevant (M=3.42). Knowledge about the daily life and routines in the target culture is considered to be somewhat less important (M=4.17). Still, the teachers recognise the importance of developing learners' ability to compare other cultures with their own in order to find out and analyse the similarities and the differences between them (M= 4.36). Less importance is given, however, to the ability to handle intercultural encounters and conflicts (M=4.80), identify and overcome cultural stereotypes and prejudices (M=5.53), as well as to familiarise with beliefs and values members of other cultures hold (M=5.78), all of which are the crucial segments of FL teaching aiming to develop IC. These results raise a question of teachers' confidence in addressing the topics which demand thorough IC knowledge and competences. This shows a need for further investigation into the subject that could also shed more light on the lowest ranking of the objective of helping learners to become aware that behaviour, beliefs and language are culture bound (M=7.68). Interestingly, quite low on the scale is the teachers' estimate of a need to become aware of one's own culture and to learn more about it (M=6.07).

Table 2

Teachers' perceptions of culture teaching objectives

The objective of culture teaching in primary school FL classroom is...	N	Min.	Max.	M*	SD
1. to acquire knowledge about the culture of the country/countries in which the language is spoken (e.g. history / geography/art, etc.).	96	1	9	3.42	2.610
2. to acquire knowledge about daily life and routines in target cultures.	96	1	9	4.17	2.009
3 to become familiar with beliefs and values people belonging to different cultures hold.	96	1	9	5.78	2.124
4. to develop respect, tolerance and empathy towards 'otherness'.	96	1	9	3.19	1.986
5. to become aware of one's own culture and learn more about it.	96	1	9	6.07	2.235
6. to become aware of the similarities and the differences between one's own and target cultures, to compare and analyse them.	96	1	9	4.36	2.234
7. to become aware of and overcome cultural stereotypes and prejudices.	96	1	9	5.53	2.229
8. to learn how to handle intercultural encounters and intercultural conflicts.	96	1	9	4.80	2.626
9. to become aware of how behaviour, beliefs, language, etc. are culture bound.	96	2	9	7.68	1.821

*M= average rank

These results show that the affective (Rank 1) and cognitive dimensions (Rank 2 and 3) are considered to be more important in culture teaching than the pragmatic dimension

(Rank 4, 5 and 6; objectives ranked 7, 8 and 9 are combinations of the pragmatic and cognitive dimensions). In other words, the teachers perceive the development of positive attitudes towards other cultures and passing on the knowledge about them as more relevant than developing intercultural skills. This supports a viewpoint widely accepted in the literature (cf. e.g. Byram, 1997) that a positive affective attitude towards foreign cultures is the basis of all other relationships with 'otherness'. On the other hand, with regard to the knowledge acquired, greater significance is devoted to gaining knowledge about the culture and civilisation issues rather than daily life and routines in other cultures, pointing to a traditional approach which favours passing on cultural information. An inconsistency between the belief that it is not so important to help learners to become aware of one's own culture and learn more about it and the high ranking of explaining the similarities and the differences between the cultures involved, opens up a question whether what they have in mind is the comparison regarding only the facts rather than deeper cultural meanings and identity issues. This view is further reinforced with the lowest estimate given to the objective of becoming aware of how behaviour, beliefs, language, etc. are culture bound.

Teachers' Beliefs about the Development of Learner IC

In order to reveal whether teachers believe learner IC can be developed in the primary school FL classroom, the teachers were asked to rate 14 statements pertaining to different facets of IC learning and teaching using a 5-point Likert scale (5=strongly agree; 1=strongly disagree). The results are given in Table 3.

The findings indicate that the teachers most strongly believe that learning about other cultures can help learners to get a better insight into their own culture (M=4.56). They are confident that learners can acquire basic knowledge about other cultures (M=4.46) and they believe that greater cultural knowledge makes learners more tolerant and understanding towards foreigners (M=4.37). However, they are moderately convinced that cultural knowledge affects learners' attitudes towards the representatives of other cultures (M=2.20). Culture learning should not be confined to FL classes but done across school subjects (M=4.17). Regarding culture teaching practices, the teachers do not have a firm viewpoint about whether culture teaching should be integrated with language teaching (M=2.79). As frequencies show, a little over a third of the respondents (36.5%) believe that culture should not be taught separately. These results again point to a need to clarify the concept of IC since language learning is "a process of exploring the ways language and culture relate to lived realities – the learners' as well as that of the target community" (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013, p. 49). Surprisingly, the teachers are quite indecisive about whether they can help learners to develop IC skills (M=2.62). Possibly, they think that intercultural skills can be developed only in an authentic IC context where real intercultural communication could take place, but do not know how to include experiential learning activities into their FL teaching. This could be

Table 3
Teachers' beliefs about the development of learner IC

	N	Min.	Max.	M	SD
1. There is no need to teach culture separately. It should be integrated into language teaching.	104	1	5	2.79	1.275
2. Only native speakers can teach culture properly.	104	1	5	1.89	1.051
3. Culture teaching should be cross-curricular.	103	1	5	4.17	1.011
4. Religious/political/ethnic/racial topics should not be discussed in the classroom.	104	1	5	1.81	.925
5. Intercultural competence should be developed only in the classrooms with ethnic minorities.	104	1	5	1.32	.839
6. Intercultural skills are hard to deal with in primary school classroom.	103	1	5	2.20	1.013
7. Due to the limited linguistic competence of primary school learners it is very hard or even impossible for them to develop intercultural competence.	102	1	5	2.25	1.048
8. Primary school learners can acquire basic knowledge about other cultures.	104	1	5	4.46	.787
9. Acquiring knowledge about other cultures does not affect learners' attitudes towards them.	99	1	5	2.20	1.212
10. Only positive aspects of both foreign and one's own culture should be discussed in the classroom.	104	1	5	1.95	1.144
11. Negative stereotypes cannot be overcome.	103	1	5	1.83	.940
12. As they acquire more knowledge about other cultures, learners become more tolerant and understanding towards foreigners.	103	1	5	4.37	.886
13. By teaching about foreign cultures we help learners become aware of their own culture, too.	104	1	5	4.56	.748
14. Although we can help learners to acquire knowledge about other cultures as well as to become aware of the similarities and the differences between one's own and other cultures, we cannot help them to develop intercultural skills.	104	1	5	2.62	1.177

the result of an inadequate and insufficient attention paid to these issues in both initial teacher education and in-service professional development. Only further research could confirm this assumption. It is encouraging, however, although conflicting in a way with the teachers' perceptions of the possibility of developing IC skills in the FL classroom discussed above, that the limited linguistic competence of primary school learners is not considered to be a constraint ($M=2.25$). Similarly, the teachers do not find it hard to work on the development of intercultural skills ($M=2.20$). Another significant finding is that the teachers mostly do not believe that only positive aspects of both foreign and learners' own culture should be dealt with in class ($M=1.95$). Since FL teachers in Croatia are mostly non-native speakers, we find it extremely important that the teachers mostly do not agree with the statement that only native speakers can teach culture properly ($M=1.89$). The frequencies show that the majority of the respondents (72.0%) hold this view, which contributes to their positive self-concept. Negative stereotypes and religious, political, ethnic and racial topics, often regarded as inappropriate for the primary

school FL context, are not viewed as problematic ($M=1.83$). Furthermore, a majority of teachers believe that negative stereotypes can be overcome (77.6%) and that religious, political, ethnical and racial topics should be discussed in the FL classroom (86.9%). In addition, the teachers strongly disagree with the statement that IC should be dealt with only in the classrooms with ethnic minorities ($M=1.32$), thus confirming their belief that IC is a competence generally required today.

Culture Teaching Practices

Culture teaching practices were investigated by enquiring into how often the teachers practise specific culture teaching activities. The teachers rated 15 activities on a five-point Likert scale (5=all the time; 1=never). The activities that are mostly initiated by teachers are represented with the statements starting with 'I' while the 'We' statements represent those activities that can be initiated by learners and/or teachers. The results are given in Table 4.

The teachers very often encourage learners to compare cultures ($M=4.10$). The reasoning behind it would be that comparing is based upon observing, noticing and interpreting cultural symbols. However, the question is whether critical thinking is involved, too, which would be the real value of this activity. Talking about one's own cultural experience is a valuable cultural activity for those who do it, since they get personally involved. Moreover, it is a cultural-awareness activity. The results show that the teachers talk about their own cultural experiences ($M=3.76$) slightly more often than prompting learners to talk about theirs ($M=3.65$). Although the difference is not significant, it might, however, raise a question of whether the teachers are still more prone to using teacher-centred activities. This opinion is reinforced with the results pertaining to learners' active role in the learning process. Namely learners often do research on the topics dealt with in class and report on their findings ($M=3.67$), while they only sometimes do research on the topics of their own choice ($M=3.14$). This might mean that the teachers only partially support learner autonomy. The results also indicate that the teachers are quite reluctant to deal with negative stereotypes ($M=3.24$), prejudices and intolerant behaviour ($M=3.17$), the concepts related to values, beliefs and norms and, therefore, require quite a thorough insight into particular cultures. This might be pointing to the teachers' inadequate competence regarding this aspect of IC teaching. Previously discussed teachers' belief about the importance of dealing with one's own culture is again confirmed by the frequency with which they use such activities ($M=3.22$). Quite contrary to our expectations, listening to songs was not ranked very high ($M=3.10$). We can only assume that the teachers do this activity for motivational and linguistic rather than for intercultural purposes. Interestingly though, quizzes are not used so often, although they are typical cultural activities. Perhaps the teachers are aware that quizzes ($M=3.05$) mainly deal with factual knowledge. Still, quizzes can always be used as a lead-in for the activities which cover wider aspects of IC. Foreign films ($M=2.47$) and literary works ($M=2.45$), although good sources of

Table 4

Perceived frequency with which teachers practise specific culture teaching activities

	N	Min.	Max.	M	Mod	SD
1. We discuss the similarities and the differences between our own and foreign cultures.	105	2	5	4.10	5	.894
2. I encourage learners to further investigate into the cultural topics dealt with in class and report on the findings.	105	1	5	3.67	4	.977
3. I encourage learners to do research into different aspects of other cultures on their own and report on the findings.	105	1	5	3.14	3	.994
4. We do role-plays based on intercultural encounters and conflicts with the aim of solving the problems involved.	105	1	5	2.41	2	1.190
5. I talk about my own experiences with foreign countries and foreigners.	104	1	5	3.76	4	.940
6. I invite foreign guest speakers to talk about their country, people and culture.	100	1	5	1.59	1	.965
7. We watch and discuss films about foreign countries.	103	1	5	2.47	2	1.092
8. We listen to foreign songs and discuss the hidden cultural symbols.	105	1	5	3.10	3	1.070
9. I encourage learners to talk about their own experiences with foreign countries and foreigners.	104	1	5	3.65	4	1.022
10. I encourage learners to talk about different aspects of their own culture.	104	1	5	3.22	3	1.052
11. We read literary works and talk about the hidden cultural symbols.	105	1	5	2.45	2	1.118
12. I encourage learners to express their own attitudes towards and opinions on incidents caused by racial/religious/gender prejudices or intolerance.	104	1	5	3.17	3	1.019
13. We discuss negative stereotypes about the members of other cultures and their possible effects.	105	1	5	3.24	3	1.123
14. We have quizzes about English speaking countries.	104	1	5	3.05	3	1.127
15. We read newspapers/magazines and find cultural topics to deal with.	105	1	5	2.32	2	1.005

cultural information and symbols, are rarely included in culture teaching. On the one hand, they might not be readily available. On the other hand, the teachers might be less skilled in the ways of dealing with such materials. We find it surprising that role-plays based on intercultural encounters and intercultural conflicts ($M=2.41$) are not practised more, since role-plays are typical of communicative approach. A possible explanation is that the teachers, although familiar with the technique itself, are not used to dealing with this particular content. The teachers very rarely bring in foreign newspapers and magazines ($M=2.32$) or invite foreign guest speakers ($M=1.59$), although they could provide a first-hand experience report on the target culture. Possibly the authentic

language of newspapers and magazines is viewed as a constraint. This interpretation is reinforced with the results from another study which indicate that the authentic language of newspapers and magazines is viewed by the teachers as too hard for primary school learners (Breka, 2012). In relation to guest speakers, the reason could be the lack of direct contact with foreigners. The solution might lie in tasks specifically designed to deal with cultural content, the use of modern technology and visits organised on a larger scale by the educational institutions.

Conclusion

Although obtained through descriptive analysis only, mainly comparison of mean values, the findings presented in this article, nevertheless, give us valuable insights into how primary school teachers of English perceive IC as well as their teaching practises in relation to IC. The results also reveal what the teachers believe about the possibility of developing it in the FL classroom.

The linguistic competence is considered to be the main FL teaching objective, while learner IC comes as second. However, since the importance of critical cultural awareness and learning strategies is not recognised, the question is whether the teachers fully understand the concept itself. Learners' interest, curiosity and openness are considered to be important.

Culture teaching is mostly defined in terms of developing positive attitudes towards other cultures and acquiring cultural knowledge, not so much about daily life and routines as about the civilisation issues. Although comparison of cultures is considered to be an important aspect of culture teaching, the teachers do not pay that much attention to dealing with one's own culture, as if not aware that culture, just like language, is part of one's identity. Much less importance is given to intercultural skills, and the least relevant culture teaching objectives are, again, the ones related to some of the essential IC issues, namely, values, beliefs, stereotypes and prejudices.

The teachers believe that culture should be taught in all school subjects and that it should not be limited to positive aspects of the target culture(s) only, just as the IC development should not be limited to ethnic minority groups. Cultural knowledge can help learners to become aware of their own cultural background, however, it cannot significantly change their attitudes towards other cultures and their members. The teachers are somewhat sceptical about the possibility of developing learners' IC skills and overcoming negative cultural stereotypes and prejudices. The teachers are moderately inclined to integrating culture and language teaching. Importantly, the limited linguistic competence of primary school learners is not viewed as problematic.

As for perceived culture teaching practices, the teacher-centred orientation mostly prevails. Experiential learning activities, although learner IC is inherent to them, are practised less frequently. Furthermore, activities based on the use of authentic materials are not favoured, while the opportunities for getting an insider's view are not seized.

Based on the results and their interpretations, it can be concluded that the teachers are generally positively disposed towards the development of learner IC in the FL classroom. The teachers' perceptions of their own teaching practices in relation to learner IC development, however, do not fully reflect those positive attitudes. The teachers' perceptions only partially comply with the proposed FL & IC teacher profile with regard to the two singled out components. While the teachers match the given FL & IC teacher profile in terms of their attitudes, the teachers' ability to select and implement the appropriate teaching activities clearly does not comply with it. A similar inconsistency between the affective and the pragmatic components of the given profile was identified in previous research into teachers' perceptions of IC development in FL teaching (cf. e.g. Sercu et al., 2005; LACE, 2007). The observed discrepancy between the teachers' positive attitudes towards the development of learner IC and their ability to select and use the appropriate teaching activities in practice, points to the areas in which the teachers might need certain support. The education of FL teachers as well as their professional development should certainly have an important role in this respect.

Findings of research into FL teacher self-perceptions can neither be regarded as equal to the actual measurements of teachers' competences, nor can they represent the real teaching situation. However, they can help us identify the areas FL teachers find problematic. According to our study, possible problems might be related to how the teachers understand the IC concept and its components as well as to the question of the teachers' ability to properly select and implement teaching activities that would foster IC development in the FL classroom. Therefore, further research that would include the observation of teaching practices and the measurement of teachers' competences for developing learner IC as well as the measurement of learner achievements in IC development, might verify the results of this study and allow formulation of empirically founded recommendations for both teacher IC development and the development of teachers' pedagogical and methodological competences relevant to learner IC development.

References

- Autobiography of Intercultural Encounters (2009). Strasbourg: Council of Europe. /online/. Retrieved on April 15, 2012 from <http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/autobiography/defaulten.asp>.
- Borg, S. (2003). Teacher cognition in language teaching: A review of research on what language teachers think, know, believe and do. *Language Teaching*, 36, 81-109. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0261444803001903>
- Breka, O. (2012). *Uloga udžbenika i nastavnika u razvoju interkulturalne kompetencije u nastavi stranih jezika. [The Role of Textbooks and Teachers in the Development of Intercultural Competence in Foreign Language Teaching and Learning]* (Doctoral dissertation). Zagreb: Filozofski fakultet Sveučilišta u Zagrebu.

- Byram, M. (1997). *Teaching and assessing intercultural communicative competence*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Byram, M. (2009). Intercultural Competence in Foreign languages. The Intercultural Speaker and the Pedagogy of Foreign Language Education. In D.K. Deardorff (Ed.), *The SAGE Handbook of Intercultural Competence* (pp. 321-332). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Byram, M., & Zarate, G. (1997). *The sociocultural and intercultural dimension of language learning and teaching*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing.
- Coperías Aguilar, M. J. (2008). Dealing with Intercultural Communicative Competence in the Foreign Language Classrooms. In E. Alcón Soler, & M.P. Safont Jordá (Eds.), *Intercultural Language Use and Language Learning* (pp. 59-78). Dodrecht: Springer.
- Elsen, A., & O. St John (2007). Learner autonomy and intercultural competence. In M. J. Raya, & L. Sercu (Eds.), *Challenges in Teacher Development: Learner Autonomy and Intercultural Competence* (pp. 15-38). Frankfurt/Main: Peter Lang.
- Fenner, A.-B. (1997). Socio-cultural competence in a 'learning to learn' context. In M. Byram, & G. Zarate (Eds.), *The sociocultural and intercultural dimension of language learning and teaching* (pp. 95-109). Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing.
- House, J. (2008). What is an 'Intercultural Speaker'? In E. Alcón Soler, & M.P. Safont Jordá (Eds.), *Intercultural Language Use and Language Learning* (pp. 59-78). Dodrecht: Springer.
- Kelly, M., Grenfell, M., Allan, R., Kriza, C., & McEvoy, W. (2004). *European Profile for Language Teacher Education – A Frame of Reference*. Commission Directorate General for Education and Culture.
- Kramsch, C. (2004). The language teacher as go-between. *Utbildning & Demokrati*, 12, (3), 37-60.
- Krumm, H.-J. (2003). Curriculare Aspekte des interkulturellen Lernens und der interkulturellen Kommunikation. In K.-R. Bausch, H. Christ, & H.-J. Krumm (Eds.), *Handbuch Fremdsprachenunterricht* (pp. 138-144). Tübingen & Basel: Franckie.
- LACE (2007). *Languages and Cultures in Europe (LACE). The Intercultural Competences Developed in Compulsory Foreign Language Education in the European Union*. Europublic. /online/. Retrieved on January 21, 2012 from ec.europa.eu/education/policies/lang/doc/lace_en.pdf.
- Liddicoat, S. J., & Scarino, A. (2013). *Intercultural Language Teaching and Learning*. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/9781118482070>
- Mihaljević Djigunović, J. (1998). *Uloga afektivnih faktora u učenju stranog jezika [The Role of Affective Factors in FL Learning]*. Zagreb: Filozofski fakultet Sveučilišta u Zagrebu.
- Newby, D., Allan, R., Fenner, A.-B, Jones, B., Komorowska, H., & Soghikyan, K. (2007). *European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Languages*. Graz: European Centre for Modern Languages.
- Petravić, A. (2011). Interkulturelle Kompetenz im Fremdsprachenunterricht – Probleme und Perspektiven der Curriculumentwicklung. In V. Domović, S. Gehrman, M. Krüger-Portratz, & A. Petravić (Eds.), *Europäische Bildung. Konzepte und Perspektiven aus fünf Ländern* (pp. 105-128). Münster: Waxmann.

- Petravić, A. (2015). Interkulturelle Kompetenz aus der Sicht der Fremdsprachenlehrkräfte – auf dem Weg zu einem neuen professionellen Profil. In S. Gehrman, J. Helmchen, M. Krüger-Portratz, & F. Ragutt (Eds.), *Bildungskonzepte und Lehrerbildung in europäischer Perspektive* (pp. 171-203). Münster: Waxmann.
- Radišić, M., Pavičić Takač, V., & Bagarić, V. (2007). (Eds.). *Kompetencije učitelja i nastavnika stranog jezika u osnovnoj školi u Republici Hrvatskoj [Competences of Primary School Foreign Language Teachers in the Republic of Croatia]*. Osijek: Sveučilište Josipa Jurja Strossmayera, Učiteljski fakultet.
- Sercu, L. (2005). Teaching Foreign Languages in an intercultural World. In L. Sercu, E. Bandura, P. Castro, L. Davcheva, C. Laskaridou, U. Lundgren, G. M. del Carmen Méndes, & P. Ryan (2005). *Foreign Language Teachers and Intercultural Competence. An International Investigation*. Clevedon et al.: Multilingual Matters. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14675980500502321>
- Sercu, L., Bandura, E., Castro, P., Davcheva, C. Laskaridou, U. Lundgren, G. M. del Carmen Méndes, & P. Ryan (2005). *Foreign Language Teachers and Intercultural Competence. An International Investigation*. Clevedon et al.: Multilingual Matters.
- Sercu, L. (2006). The foreign language and intercultural competence teacher: The acquisition of a new professional identity. *Intercultural Education*, 17 (1), 55-72.
- Sercu, L., & St. John, O. (2007). Teachers' beliefs and their impact on teaching practise: a literature review. In M. J. Raya, & L. Sercu (Eds.), *Challenges in Teacher Development: Learner Autonomy and Intercultural Competence* (pp. 39-64). Frankfurt/Main: Peter Lang.
- Spitzberg, B.H., & Chagon, G. (2009). Conceptualizing Intercultural Competence. In D.K. Dardorff (Ed.), *The SAGE Handbook of Intercultural Competence* (pp. 321-332). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Zarate, G. (1997). Introduction. In M. Byram, & G. Zarate (Eds.), *The sociocultural and intercultural dimension of language learning and teaching* (pp. 7-14). Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing.

Olinka Breka

Faculty of Mechanical Engineering and Naval Architecture,
University of Zagreb
Ivana Lučića 5, 10000 Zagreb, Croatia
olinka.breka@fsb.hr

Ana Petravić

Faculty of Teacher Education, University of Zagreb
Savska cesta 77, 10000 Zagreb, Croatia
ana.petravic@ufzg.hr

Učitelji stranih jezika i interkulturalna dimenzija u osnovnoškolskom obrazovanju

Sažetak

U radu se prikazuju rezultati istraživanja predodžbi osnovnoškolskih učitelja engleskog jezika s obzirom na ciljeve učenja i poučavanja stranih jezika, ciljeve nastave stranih jezika u segmentu kulture i civilizacije, na mogućnosti razvoja interkulturalne kompetencije u nastavi stranih jezika, kao i s obzirom na vlastitu nastavnu praksu poučavanja kulturne dimenzije. Istraživanjem se željelo ustanoviti u kojoj mjeri učitelji odgovaraju recentnoj konceptualizaciji profila „učitelja stranog jezika i interkulturalne kompetencije“. Rezultati potvrđuju pozitivan odnos učitelja prema razvoju interkulturalne kompetencije, no istodobno pokazuju određenu inkonzistenciju između učiteljske kognicije i uvjerenja s jedne i samopercepcije nastavne prakse s druge strane. Polazeći od tih rezultata, izvode se implikacije za daljnja istraživanja u području učiteljskih kompetencija za razvoj interkulturalne kompetencije u nastavi stranih jezika i za inicijalno obrazovanje učitelja stranih jezika i njihov profesionalni razvoj.

Ključne riječi: *interkulturalna kompetencija; nastava stranih jezika; profil učitelja stranog jezika i interkulturalne kompetencije; razvoj interkulturalne kompetencije u nastavi stranih jezika.*