

VARYING THE I-R-E TURN: PRE-SERVICE LANGUAGE TEACHERS ADOPTING AN INTERCULTURAL STANCE IN THEIR PEDAGOGY

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Abstract

Our paper explores how pre-service language teachers learned new concepts after having engaged with new ideas about teacher questioning techniques. It also explores how the pre-service language teachers themselves perceived their new learning. Previous research by Harbon and Moloney (in press) showed that teacher awareness of using variations of Initiation-Response-Evaluation (I-R-E) in classroom discourse may result in students becoming intercultural 'investigators' through enquiry. The analysis of classroom language allows teachers to examine how they construct themselves and others through discourses they use and encounter. Our previous study found that the language classroom can feature the fluid development of inter-subjectivity in students, through the construction of intercultural enquiry within language learning. There has been limited research attention to the development of discourse awareness and the new skills necessary for teachers to employ this strategy. The researchers conducted training workshops to introduce two groups of pre-service language teachers to discourse analysis strategies. The pre-service teachers examined examples of the I.R.E turn, exploring whether they could recognize and adopt the intercultural stance being illustrated. Data from Concurrent Verbal Reporting with pairs of pre-service teachers at the intensive training, and subsequent reflective journal entries, shed light on whether and how the teachers were able to learn to construct an intercultural classroom discourse.

1. Introduction

Researchers and teacher educators in the broad curriculum field have advocated the inclusion of classroom communication training activities into teacher education programs (Hunt, Simonds & Cooper, 2002), as teacher effectiveness is intrinsically linked to communication competence (Worley, Titsworth, Worley & Cornett-De Vito, 2007). It has been shown that reflective attention to aspects of communication improves communication capabilities (Rubin, Rubin & Jordan, 1997). It is believed that pre-service teachers lack the insight necessary to analyse their communication acts deeply to make meaning from them (Hunt, Simonds & Cooper, 2002) because they are more concerned with communication matters relating to themselves rather than those relating to communication with the students in their classes.

Nevertheless pre-service teachers appreciate having this communication explicitly developed as part of their university curriculum (Cronin & Glenn, 1991).

In a globalised classroom, intercultural competence is considered a key teaching skill (Mayer, Luke & Luke, 2008). In the case of pre-service language teachers, there is a particular relationship between communication and pedagogy. In an intercultural language pedagogy, language teachers today need new communication skills (Morgan, 2007). They are asked to develop a questioning style which facilitates student enquiry, in order to create a classroom inclusive of the diverse student perspectives on languages and cultures. Sercu (2006) suggests that new skills for language teachers must include the communicative ability to facilitate student competence in curiosity, involving teacher skills of questioning and critical cultural awareness.

This pedagogical shift, grounded in a constructivist model of education, positions knowledge as contestable, and open to interpretation, and encourages meta-cognitive self-awareness of the knowledge construction process in students (Honebein, 1996, p. 11). The teacher's role is as a facilitator, who guides the learner to arrive at his or her interpretation of the truth of the subject. The teacher must develop a learner who is active, questioning, self-directed, creative, and innovative (Von Glasersfeld, 1989).

This study is an application, in the pre-service teacher context, of previous research by Harbon and Moloney (in press) conducted with in-service teachers, which showed that teacher awareness of classroom variations of the linguistic turn known as Initiation – Response – Evaluation (I-R-E) in classroom discourse may result in language teachers and their learners moving into the role of intercultural 'investigators'. The prior research indicated that, through teacher questioning techniques, the language classroom can feature the construction of intercultural enquiry within language learning.

In this current study described here, two university teacher education settings were the sites of intercultural 'training' of pre-service language teachers. Having already examined with the preservice teachers the principles of intercultural pedagogy (Liddicoat, Papademetre, Scarino, & Kohler, 2003), the researchers conducted training workshops introducing two groups of pre-service teachers to discourse analysis strategies, as one means of implementing an intercultural pedagogy. . The pre-service teachers examined examples of the I-R-E linguistic turn, in transcripts of language classroom discourse. The study investigated whether pre-service teachers could learn to recognize, and later, in their practice apply, the enquiry questioning technique. The research goal of the project was to determine whether the use of reflective analysis of classroom discourse may act as a useful tool in pre-service language teacher education. The paper argues that the activity was an effective teaching tool in the pre-service teacher context, raising a number of issues, and supporting the development of pre-service teachers' communication skills in relation to classroom intercultural enquiry.

2. Literature Review

This study sits within, and is informed by, existing research developments within intercultural language learning and new directions in the application of a linguistically oriented examination of classroom intercultural discourse.

2.1 An intercultural approach to language teaching and learning

Intercultural language teaching and learning is widely encouraged in contemporary foreign and second language learning in Australian, North American and European contexts (Board of Studies New South Wales, 2003; Corbett, 2003; Kramsch, 2006; Lazar, Huber-Kriegler, Lussier, Matei & Peck, 2007; Scarino & Liddicoat, 2009). No longer is linguistic proficiency the sole goal in learning a language. As an integral part of language acquisition, teachers also need to develop in their students a set of intercultural understandings, or competence, which allows students to develop understanding of why language is as it is, and how processes of language and culture impact on meaning.

Within student language learning, Byram (1989), and Kramsch (1993), describe learners developing intercultural competence through de-centering from their own first culture. Intercultural behaviour is seen as the individual's ability to negotiate meaning across cultural boundaries as he/she establishes his/her own identity as a user of another language.

We know that teacher modeling, behaviour and attitudes affect intercultural learning outcomes in language students (Moloney, 2008, 2010a). Kramsch (1987) questioned whether language teachers possess sufficient meta-awareness of their own culture to have the ability to engage with their students in more than superficial enquiry across cultures. Thus attention to pre-service teachers' questioning skills is an appropriate contribution to the development of professional skills in this emerging research area.

2.2 Linking intercultural language learning with a linguistics-oriented approach

This study is informed by the essential link we see between the aims of intercultural language learning and a linguistically-oriented examination of discourse in the language classroom. Kramsch (2006) traces the work of Edmondson and House in 1998 who examined how communication could be investigated by interrogating turns-at-talk. Kramsch (2006, p. 324) says that "language teachers should teach non-native speakers how to recognize and adopt the discursive behaviour of the native speakers... in order to find out ultimately how they think, what they value, and how they see the world". Communicative competence requires explicit linguistic analysis of the cultural dimension.

Kramsch (2006, p. 324) also cites Hu's work from 1999 that notes:

an intercultural pedagogy takes into account the students' culturally diverse representations, interpretations, expectations, memories, and identifications, that are, in turn, made thematic, brought into the open through personal narratives and multilingual writings, and discussed openly in class.

It is the role of the language teacher to mediate these pedagogical and linguistic processes. This happens largely though the teacher's ability to elicit enquiry through questioning.

A language teacher, planning for learners to become communicatively competent, needs to develop awareness of his/her own communicative strategies in linguistic exchange. If the linguistic exchange becomes a pedagogical strategy in terms of questioning technique

(Dashwood, 2004), then the resulting language learning may have a wider scope of the intercultural reflectivity embodied within it.

Intercultural language learning involves risk-taking by teachers (Byram, Gribkova & Starkey, 2002), as they ask their students questions to which the teachers may not know the answer, to which there may not be one single truth/answer, or may not be able to predict the answers from prior experience. Jokikokko (2005, p.76) describes the importance of teachers' ability to engage in "dialogical relationship" with their language students as part of teacher intercultural competence, and describes teacher intercultural competence as the "courage to think and act interculturally" in the broader school environment. All of this contributes to language teachers adopting an intercultural stance in their pedagogy (Moran, 2001).

The role of enquiry questioning in particular is to move teachers and learners beyond static, reductive essentialisation of culture and cultural artefacts (Dervin, 2010; Holliday, 2010; Moloney & Harbon, 2010b; Young & Sercombe, 2010, p. 182) and to allow students to construct their own interpretations and subjectivities in relation to their peers in the other language.

We turn to a brief focus on the linguistic aspects of the I-R-E as a useful branch of linguistics for the teacher of languages and cultures. According to Kramsch (2010) we need to turn to discourse to explain communication across cultures.

2.3 The I-R-E turn

We believe that the 'linguistic turn' literature, especially work on the I-R-E turn or exchange (Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975; 1992), may inform pre-service teachers' ability to engage in intercultural communicative skills. Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson's report, published in 1974 by the Linguistics Society of America's journal, *Language*, was one of the first studies to examine turn-taking in conversation. According to Clyne (1994, p. 8), it was around the same time that Sinclair and Coulthard (1975; 1992) isolated the "three-part exchanges: Initiation – Response – Follow on" as a linguistic focus for understanding interaction. Edwards and Westgate (1994) cite Johnson's (1979) work from observations in sixty classrooms in three southern American states where the 'discussion cycle' of I-R-E was "so frequent and persistent" that it was seemingly linked to power and race issues.

Hall (2002, p. 80) states:

... the teacher-led, three-part-sequence of Initiation-Response-Evaluation (IRE), typifies the discourse of Western schooling from Kindergarten to university...the pattern involves the teacher asking a question to which the teacher already knows the answer. The purpose of such questioning is to elicit information from the students so that the teacher can ascertain whether they know the material.

However the I-R-E exchange may not be such a productive pedagogy for intercultural learning (Dashwood, 2004). I-R-E discourages investigation of language and culture, due to both the teachers' tight control of the linguistic exchange, and the closed nature of the 'expected answer', which does not align with inclusive intercultural principles. Tsui (1995) and Dashwood (2004) are two scholars who have more recently examined language teaching

and learning in classroom interaction from a linguistics orientation. Tsui’s work in 1995 concluded that “studies conducted on classroom interaction have shown that student talk accounts for an average of less than 30 per cent of talk in “teacher-fronted” classrooms” (Tsui, 1995, p. 81). Dashwood’s (2004, p. 20) Australian research found how the language teacher “invariably reclaims the ‘turn’, thus reducing student opportunities to talk on task”.

Harbon and Moloney (in press) postulate that language teachers who learn this discourse analysis strategy may discover the extent to which they have the communicative capability to allow more construction of intercultural learning in school students. The traditional I-R-E may look something like the following exchange investigating Spanish behavior in a dinner party dialogue:

Who	Line	Text	Framing (What’s going on here?)
Tchr	1 2	What do they do here? Do they kiss or what do they do?	Initiation (I). Questions addressed to the students re their observation of the photo text.
St #1	3	They shake hands.	Response (R).
Tchr	4	<i>Le dan le mano.</i> [They shake hands.]	Evaluation (E). Teacher confirms the student’s answer [in Spanish].

Table 1: Example extract of an I-R-E exchange

If teachers can change their classroom communication, with a simple focus on adapting their questioning strategies from the I-R-E pattern, they will thereby create a more open and potentially intercultural learning (Harbon & Moloney, in press). An alternative to the above I-R-E interchange, constructed by us to show how to vary the I-R-E exchange, might have been:

Who	Text	Framing (What’s going on here?)
Tchr	What do they do here? What do you notice? Do they kiss or what do they do?	Initiation (I). Questions addressed to the students re their observation of the photo text.
St #1	They shake hands.	Response (R).
Tchr	How do you know that?	Initiation (I). Question again addressed to all students.
St #2	You can see how those two people are leaning towards each others.	Response (R)
Tchr	So we might expect either a cheek air-kiss or a hand-shake...?	Response (R)
St #3	So how do you know what to do?	Initiation (I)

Table 2: Example extract of an I-R-I-R-R-I exchange

The variation to the I-R-E above — in this case the example was I-R-I-R-R-I — is the exchange pattern, or linguistic turn, that allowed an inclusive intercultural discovery to occur. Our thesis from that work has been that (i) an examination of the linguistics aspects of the language notions assists in teachers knowing more about the language classroom practices,

and (ii) this 'knowing about' language, allows a deeper critical intercultural stance to be taken, resulting in both teachers and learners achieving intercultural learning outcomes.

The usefulness of this approach lies in its ability to go beyond the so-called "solid" model of culture (Dervin, 2010), where questioning and teaching have promoted "truths" and knowledge or stereotypes about the 'Other'. It clearly also offers the opportunity for students to develop the skill to hypothesise and empathise.

We are aware that the I-R-E exchange is a useful one in certain contexts, especially for checking comprehension, checking recall, and for behaviour management purposes. Yet we are also mindful that there are questioning techniques that allow teachers to open up much longer exchanges which become fruitful to create a learning culture, elicit learner interpretations, build on learner contributions, negotiate meaning, provide feedback and promote reflection (Hall, 2002, p. 90). Such exchanges were illustrated in our prior studies (Moloney & Harbon, 2010a, 2010b). We showed how a language teacher's pedagogical choice to vary the linguistic exchange may impact on learners developing intercultural knowledge (Moran, 2001).

In an attempt to explore this supposition further, we have used our previously collected classroom transcripts as an educational tool for pre-service language teachers. In the training strategy we have devised, the pre-service teachers explore for themselves how teachers use questions and different patterns of interaction in the language classroom, and explore how such patterns might help or hinder the intercultural learning taking place in the languages classroom.

3. Methodology

This study follows a dual-strategy qualitative research design, comprising a Concurrent Verbal Reporting protocol (Jääskeläinen, 2010) and student journaling (Harbon & Shen, 2010). The unusual aspect of this study involved the researchers conducting a linguistics training strategy to train pre-service language teachers in discourse analysis strategies. The methodology of the study was not a discourse analysis itself, rather the subject of the task that the pre-service teachers undertook. As the pre-service teachers undertook the task they concurrently reported aloud their process and this was audio recorded. The analysis of the participant Concurrent Verbal Reporting data was undertaken through Content Analysis (Ryan & Bernard, 2000).

3.1 Participants: Group A

Group A comprised 14 pre-service teacher participants, 3 male, 11 female. The languages they taught included any one (or more) of French, German, Italian, Spanish, Japanese, and Chinese. In the Group A university undergraduate program, pre-service language teachers complete three units of study in Languages Methodology. In 3rd year, they complete an introduction to Languages methodology for 26 hours, with 12 days practicum. In 4th year, they then complete two units of Languages Methodology, in Semester 1 TEP431 and in semester 2 TEP432, each course consisting of 13 weekly 3 hour workshops. During 4th year they are also completing a further 48 days of school practicum, typically carried out one or two days per week throughout the year. At the time of the research study, Group A pre-

service teachers were in Week 3 of TEP432, thus had considerable methodology knowledge. All pre-service teachers had completed a significant portion of their school practicum parallel to attending workshops, and were familiar with the notions of an intercultural approach to the syllabus and pedagogy. Five of the pre-service teachers had included Linguistics units in their degree.

3.2 Participants: Group B

Pre-service teachers in Group B comprised 11 participants from a class of 24: seven were enrolled in a Master of Teaching degree and four were in a Bachelor of Education (Secondary: Humanities and Social Sciences)/ Bachelor of Arts program. The pre-service teachers in this research study take part in a joint unit of study around the language teaching curriculum and methodology in the third year of the undergraduate combined degree and the first year of the graduate entry degree. The languages they are training for include any one (or more) of French, German, Italian, Spanish, Japanese and Chinese. At the time of the study the pre-service teachers were in week 3 of the second language curriculum unit of study. None of the pre-service teachers had yet been out on a school practicum placement but the graduate entry pre-service teachers were due to go on a placement two weeks after the data collection, whereas the undergraduate pre-service teachers had two more months before their first school placement. The pre-service teachers complete 25 days of practicum in the year of the data collection, a further 20 days the following year and then a 50 day internship.

3.3 Method

Moloney teaches in the pre-service language teacher education programs at the university we have called Group A and Fielding teaches in the pre-service language teacher education programs at the university we have called Group B. Harbon was a guest teacher/researcher for this project, and worked with Moloney and Fielding with the two groups of pre-service language teachers. Approval of ethical considerations had been given in both universities.

The data were gathered in a series of steps. The researchers explained to the pre-service teachers that the workshop activities and discussion would take place regardless of voluntary participation in the research component. The research component involved audio-recording the discussions of the pairs of pre-service teacher participants as they undertook the training. Class members who did not want to have their discussion recorded, who did not elect to participate in our research, were seated separately in the respective classrooms. Volunteer pairs of participants sat at their desks with an audio-recorder to record discussions. Participants had an additional option to keep diaries/journals during the subsequent school placement, should they wish to write about their attempts at implementing the different interaction patterns in their classes and how their questioning techniques might be impacting student learning.

The training, conducted by Harbon, consisted of an introduction to I-R-E discourse analysis strategies, within the context of intercultural language pedagogy. This was followed by 3 workshop hours in which the analysis activity took place. Transcripts of actual French, Italian, Japanese and Spanish language lessons from schools (published in previous research, see Harbon & Moloney, 2010a; 2010b) were provided to the pairs of pre-service teachers for analysis. A sample of classroom transcript used is included as Appendix A. Pre-service

teachers participated in a Concurrent Verbal Reporting protocol, whereby the audio recorder recorded the “stream-of-consciousness thinking and reflecting” dialogue between the pair of pre-service teachers as they grapple with this new analysis. Pre-service language teachers examined the transcripts, identifying and labeling the I-R-E turn in the transcript discourse, and questioning whether the discourse was constructing an intercultural stance.

As a final step, the three researchers encouraged pre-service teachers to write diaries/journals during their school practicum period regarding the newly introduced teacher question and answer patterns. Due to the time structure of the study in relation to pre-service teacher practicum, only limited diary data were collected.

The researchers transcribed the audio tapes of the Concurrent Verbal Reporting protocols. One pre-service teacher from Group B, emailed diary entries directly to the researchers during the school placement. Data from the Concurrent Verbal Reporting protocols and subsequent reflective diary entries were analysed. Data were reduced through content analysis, and themes emerging were further reduced to inform the writing phase.

4. Findings and Discussion

The research question underpinning the study concerned whether the I-R-E pattern analysis strategy developed by Harbon and Moloney (in press) could be taught to pre-service language teachers to allow them insights into intercultural processes occurring in teacher questioning strategies.

Across the two sets of pre-service teachers at the two universities there was a range of responses to the task of engaging with the I-R-E turn. Some pre-service teachers engaged with the task readily, some engaged with the task at a slower pace, and some pre-service teachers experienced some difficulty in engaging with the task. We sought to explore whether it was possible for pre-service teachers to engage with the notions of the interactional classroom patterns, and the potential impact on intercultural language learning. Our findings indicate that it is possible for pre-service teachers to be trained to engage with the strategy, but with varying levels of teacher support needed for different groups of pre-service teachers.

In order to report the data here, we refer to the pre-service teachers according to their Groups, either A1, A2, A3, B1, B2, B3, and individual pre-service teachers within those pairs as A1S1, A1S2, B1S1, or B1S2, and so on.

4.1 Findings across the two groups

In Group A, most pre-service teachers had no difficulty with identification of the linguistic turns. Moloney and Harbon reported having observed pre-service teachers being seemingly engaged with the task, role-played reading the exchanges out loud, laughing and showing enjoyment of the process. Within the data from Group B it is evident that there was a continuum of understanding about the process of identifying I-R-E linguistic turn. There is evidence that some pairs of pre-service teachers found the training process quite difficult, some managed the process slowly, and yet one pair appeared to experience no difficulty at all in their confidence to identify the I-R-E pattern.

Some pre-service teachers from each of the groups discussed the various turns at length, debating what they believed was the correct identification of I, R and E. In much of the debate the majority of pre-service teachers indicated that they felt the terms I-R-E were inadequate. For example Group A1 labelled some items of classroom dialogue “other” and also labelled some items as both response and evaluation.

Most of the groups across the two sites discussed the variable function of response/feedback. They recognised that there were examples of the school students in the Spanish and Italian class transcripts initiating a dialogue rather than simply taking the traditional student role of response. The identification of this positive and unanticipated pattern prompted more general comment about their own pre-service practicum practice.

All Group A pre-service teachers recognised that the French transcript differed from the other language transcripts, in teacher use of repetitive rhetorical questions, lack of enquiry questions, and evident subsequent student disengagement. Group A5 identified that many of the French teacher questions failed to ask for any response. They noted how much this interaction pattern limited discussion and reduced the potential for intercultural insights to be developed amongst the language learners in the class. The Group B participants did not explicitly make this same assertion.

4.2 Group A Responses

Group A1 identified that the French teacher was not achieving any communication with the language learners: Pre-service teacher A1S1 commented that the teacher in the transcript was “*not really achieving any aims within the lesson*”. This French lesson proved the most problematic, with groups perceiving that the turns become confused when they perceived that the teacher was, as one pre-service teacher, A2S2 said, “*having trouble, or fed up*”. They saw teacher emotion and frustration interfering with the communication in class. In regards to critiquing the French lesson pre-service teacher A3S2 said: “*she’s initiating all the time... maybe the class is easily disruptive*”. Pre-service teachers were able to critique this teacher from their own experience, and to speculate about more effective teacher communication. A comment by pre-service Teacher A1S2 was: “*if you use open questions you can draw out their knowledge, get better response*”. They show understanding that the inadequate questioning techniques, in a downward spiral, may vary and deteriorate, getting caught up in behavior management and thus may limit any intercultural dialogue.

Group A pairs were overall quick and efficient in their identification of the variations of the I-R-E, and in particular in their perception of how it worked positively in the Spanish and Italian lessons, where the teacher questions elicited extended patterns of multiple responses and feedback were evident. Group A3 perceived that the Italian extract was, as pre-service Teacher A3S1, commented, “*a class discussion where the kids are leading the discussion themselves*”. They recognized that a good response can also act as feedback and evaluation. As such they were re-defining the terms to show that response can be active as well as passive. They were alert to the danger of creating stereotypes in these discussions, and showed good critique of the teaching techniques.

Groups A3 and A4 displayed high levels of critical reflection. In the discussion about the Spanish lesson extract, which featured extended intercultural enquiry, pre-service Teacher

A4S2 noticed the “*spiral questions which go deeper*”, and noticed that there was lots of feedback. Pre-service Teacher A4S2 further noted: “*this is really good, the way she’s going into the text, using what they know, she makes them construct everything... She’s really only at two points given them actual information, she makes them find it*”. This participant was able to proceed to a deeper level of personal reflection: “*sometimes I think we don’t want to have kids’ input because we are afraid of the silence when no one will volunteer the answer, but sometimes we have to take that time.*” Pre-service Teacher A4S1 responded: “*but it needs management to include everyone, especially with multi-levels*”. In this exchange the pre-service teachers showed high level understanding of the processes the teachers engaged in, showing reflective practice and linking to their own understandings of classroom interaction.

All pairs in Group A related the task to their own practice. A3S2 planned an adoption of an inclusive enquiry questioning technique in her practice: “*I find myself asking questions that are too specific. I need to think more broadly, to get their own ideas.*” In this way pre-service teachers showed evidence of linking the transcript excerpts to their own practice and were able to identify limitations in their own questioning techniques that may hinder the intercultural dialogue in the classroom, and how to expand them.

Pre-service teacher A4S1 also perceived a connection between classroom questioning, that is, the extended I-R-F-F-F process, and the intent of the local New South Wales language syllabus (Board of Studies NSW, 2003). This syllabus features a model of three intersecting circles, representing the language learning process as involving Using Language, Making Linguistic Connections, and Moving Between Cultures. Pre-service teacher A4S1 observed that “*With this type of teaching, you are really enforcing the 3 circles. You’ve got the language, the cultural thing, you’re getting them to think and do it. It is a framework to show them the connections.*” Pre-service teacher A4S2 responded that the questioning which elicited extended responses, and the classroom learner responses in the transcript “*also shows the relativity of culture, there is no one way to do things. I can talk about my experiences, and include the students’, too.*”

Pre-service Teacher A4S1 also proposed that to avoid this intercultural questioning being always a teacher-centred process, she intends to take it one step further and make it student centred: “*I am thinking I will get them into groups to do these discussions, rather than me directing it*”. In this way she not only reflects on what she and other teachers have done in the past but makes plans for how she may amend her future practice based upon these observations and reflections, stimulated by the task.

4.3 Group B Responses

As mentioned, the Group B pre-service teachers indicated a spectrum of engagement and ease with the task. In the following data, Group B Pair 1 can be seen to find the process quite slow and complex.

B1S1: (reads from transcript) *If you’re like meeting with friends for like, at a café or whatever, ... Oh! But wouldn’t you find it annoying?*

B1S2: *I think that might be Follow Up.*

B1S1: *The first one is a question and an Initiation. But it’s not answering this. The second one is not a Follow Up. Hang on. And this one, I think this one... Because they are “up to an hour late”*

they say “oh wouldn’t’ that be annoying”. So “you would find annoying, you would find annoying”. An hour later you would be turning up and nobody would be there. Find annoying, find annoying. Yeah.

In a similar manner to Group A, pre-service teachers in Group B also showed that they found the labelling of a simple I-R-E exchange inadequate. They found overlap in the terms ‘Feedback’ and ‘Evaluation’ and were unclear about the difference. However their exchange was not as in-depth as Group A’s on this topic and this could be due to the limited in-classroom experience of the Group B pre-service teachers. The confusion between the labels E and F can be seen in B2’s extract:

B2S1: I just wasn’t too clear on what “feedback” was.

B2S2: We weren’t sure if an F, or was an E or an F.

Pair B3 indicated that they needed a deeper understanding of the labels to be able to undertake the task confidently. They said:

B3S1: Is that an evaluation of what the student has just said? It’s not a good evaluation, it’s more like a follow up.

B3S2: They’re making connections.

B3S1: I need more clarity about what an evaluation actually does.

B3S2: Yeah, so do I.

B3S1: Shall we ask Lesley, or...?

Pair B3 showed in this extract that although they were questioning the labels and their certainty about the interpretation of each label, rather than this showing them having difficulty with the task, it actually shows their higher level engagement with the task. They show that they are questioning the teacher’s form of questioning in terms of how “good” the teacher’s evaluation was. They also show that they link their analysis back to their knowledge of the syllabus outcomes and interpret the learner discourse as “making connections”, what these pre-service teachers see as indicative of beginning the intercultural dialogue. However, the pre-service teachers also show that to engage on an even deeper level they would like to have discussion and clarification around the labels and explore how much room for interpretation there is with this system of labelling. The groups in site B, perhaps because of their lack of in-classroom experience, interpreted the labelling task as quite rigid in its structure.

One pair, however, began to question the labels, finding the ‘F’ function confusing in terms of whether the term referred to follow-up or feedback. The exchange suggests perhaps that a slightly different label may be appropriate at times. It also shows the pre-service teachers’ engagement with the task as they add their own level of interpretation to the labels.

B4S1: (reading) Nihon de, ichigatsu tsuitachi wa, kazoku no hi desu. In Japan, the 1st of January is a family day. So that’s a...?

B4S2: E....?

B4S1: What are the options again?

B4S2: Feedback? or Follow up?

B4S1: Yes. Feedback or Follow up.

Their discussion led to an interpretation that the F could mean either feedback or a follow up question.

Pair B3 showed that they could also work through the task and label the responses with ease: (French lesson extract)

B3S1: *Then student Response-*

B3S2: (reading) *Habite. Which means "to live". So that's Response. So she must have said (exclaims) "Habite!!"*

B3S1: *So that's an Affirmation?*

B3S2: *Evaluation. Cause they've got like exclamation marks, so she must have kind of like happily (exclaims again) yeah "Habite!"*

B3S1: *Um. (reads) But why? Pourquoi?*

Pair B3 commented in particular on the value of being able to role-play the parts of the teacher and learners in the transcripts in order to gain a visual picture and a deeper understanding of each exchange. They showed how this procedure enabled them to connect with the interaction and see the decision-making and intentions behind the speech.

In contrast however, some pairs in Group B found the process of labelling the classroom transcriptions easy and faced no difficulty within this labelling task. One group of 3 pre-service language teachers in the study (Group B5) commented in the following manner:

B5S1: *So we've got a choice of I, R, E and F?*

B5S2: *yes*

B5S3: *Yep.*

B5S2: *Okay (all read the first teacher "turn")*

B5S3: *Initiation.*

B5S2: *Yep.*

(Pre-service teachers read the next "turn".)

B5S3: *Would it be Evaluation and then Follow up?*

B5S2: *Um Yep.*

B5S1: *So the evaluation is (reads) "Because they don't know each other, what they do is they shake hands." And the Follow Up would be "And what do you do, when you want to leave?"*

B5S2: *So that would be Follow Up – Initiation with a Follow Up question.*

In a similar manner to one pair in Group A, there was one pair in Group B who was able to show higher order consideration of the I-R-E exchange. This pair showed how they questioned the nature of the exchange being role-bound, and whether a classroom learner might be able to be the initiator with the teacher becoming the respondent. Pre-service teacher B3S1 said: *"So it's almost like the student speaking initiating and the teacher response?"*

4.4 Follow-up beyond the end of the task

One Group B pre-service teacher wrote to us immediately after he started his first school placement, showing his ongoing engagement with the discourse. We can only presume he had continued to think about our training, and was implementing some of the questioning strategies during his school experience practicum placement.

Email from pre-service teacher #1, 4 Sept 2012. *Dear Ruth and Lesley, Placement is going better than I could have ever wished for. ... I've been trying my best to vary the IRE pattern in my lessons, and I'll admit it isn't easy, but I'm glad it was brought to my attention. I've mainly been trying to avoid giving feedback in the form of a 'no' or by confirming answers with a 'yes' and moving on. Today, during a Prezi on the olympic games with year 8, I asked a simple question "Who can tell me X?" and by saying "and..?" after each answer I was able to elicit numerous responses, rather than simply accepting the first answer and moving on. Much more student talk as a result. And yet, my lessons remain far too teacher-centred. It seems that at my school, children are deemed 'good' if they're being silent. Obviously I have to fit in with my supervising teacher's style of management, but it is somewhat counter-intuitive that students should be silent when learning a language. I'll probably struggle with this for a while to come. I'll try my best to keep track of any other ways I vary my questioning patterns. See you in class, signed Student [real name withheld].*

As this extract shows, the follow-up to the task within the context of school placement became a catalyst for reflective practice. As noted, Group A pre-service teachers made constant reference to their practicum and own experience of classroom discourse in the I-R-E task. However, the Group B pre-service teachers had not yet been in schools on a formal placement and so it was not until after the I-R-E class tasks that they had a chance to link on a deeper level with their own practice. We anticipate from this that the engagement with the I-R-E task is therefore able to be undertaken at a deeper level when the pre-service teachers have access to their own reflections on practice to incorporate into the discussion. The pre-service teachers from Group A showed how their engagement with the task could be seen on a deeper level on more occasions as they had their own practice to refer to.

4.5 Findings about the training task

Pre-service teachers made a number of observations about the task itself and its value within their pre-service training. We identify six ways in which the task served to develop skills in the pre-service teachers.

Firstly it taught pre-service teachers to recognise the I-R-E turn. The majority of the pre-service teachers had not completed any formal studies in Linguistics, and therefore this initial learning — identifying the linguistic turn—was an important starting point in raising recognition and awareness of the role of classroom discourse. Pre-service Teacher A3S2 said,

“It’s good because we both tend to be closed down in our I-R-E (although there is definitely a time for I-R-E). A straightforward I-R-E is good as a “display question” for the rest of class, to highlight a linguistic feature, but not much good for discussion. This was a useful task. Makes you look at what you do yourself”.

Group A2S1 commented: *“you could compare better and weaker teachers’ questions, that was a good thing. You could see that some are not good”.*

Secondly, the data indicate that the task was successful in enabling some pre-service teachers to see that intercultural learning can occur as a result of an inclusive enquiry questioning technique, and through varying the I-R-E turn. Pre-service teacher A1S2 commented: *“I would never have thought to look at it this way. It highlights the fact that Australian culture*

will be obvious to some kids but not to others. So comparing cultures is too simplistic, not appropriate". The task itself enabled extended critique and the pre-service teachers were able to pursue higher order questioning in some of their engagement with the task. Thus the task was itself eliciting the kind of questioning that the intercultural discourse promotes.

Thirdly, the task facilitated reflective practice encouraging the pre-service language teachers to apply and adopt variations on the I-R-E in their own practice, their communication styles in their future classrooms, and ability to critique what they had seen other teachers doing in class. Pre-service Teacher A2S2 said: *"the task gives us more perspective on our practice. Shows us that good strategy works, makes us think about our teaching style, shows us how to keep students on their toes. I will definitely take this and try to do more like this."* Pre-service Teacher B2S2 said in the unsolicited email, *"I'm glad it was brought to my attention"*, and shows ongoing engagement with reflective practice while out in a school setting.

Fourthly, the task in itself proved to be an intercultural task. Pre-service language teachers are diverse in their educational, cultural and linguistic backgrounds. The data showed that a number of pre-service teachers held diverse cultural beliefs about the appropriate role of teacher, and teacher discourse, and interpreted "teacher talk" and "student talk" through their own cultural lenses. Sometimes this led to their evaluative judgements of the teaching as good or bad. For example a Japanese-background pre-service teacher was uncomfortable with the notion of classroom language learners asking questions, and said: *"it's always the teacher who evaluates, because they know everything"*. Their Australian partner responded: *"Did you just call students dumb?"*

In another example through this cultural lens, one Chinese-background pre-service teacher was able to identify her anxiety with a constructivist education model, and perceived evident loss of teacher authority. She also appeared unfamiliar with the style of critique involved in the task itself, perhaps due to discomfort in critiquing a more experienced teacher's work, and she took a submissive role in the task. A third example came from another Japanese-background pre-service teacher who said: *"It's an intercultural task: because, you know, we in Japan, as teachers, we don't praise much. Is the teacher in the transcript Japanese? This will affect how she responds, the kind of praise she gives."* It appears that the pre-service teacher's own views of what it is to be Japanese influenced her interpretation of the classroom interaction patterns. These pre-service teachers, however, were able to make these beliefs part of the critical discussion, contributing to a diverse perception and engagement with the task.

Fifthly, pre-service teachers recognised that the task is especially appropriate for pre-service or beginner teachers. They saw that communication in the classroom can be aligned with behaviour management issues, which for many pre-service teachers is a concern. Pre-service Teacher A1S1 said: *"I think in general when you use very tight I-R-E and the teacher is talking all the time, it's an easy trap to fall into. Especially as beginning teachers, you want to keep tight control"*. Similarly the email received from Pre-service Teacher B2S2 who had written the email while on prac, indicated his struggle with the system as he sought to implement a more intercultural set of questioning techniques with this new understanding. He found it conflicted with the traditional view of some teachers that good behaviour is exhibited through a quiet classroom, whereas he wants to achieve a communicative classroom setting. He said,

“by saying “and..?” after each answer I was able to elicit numerous responses, rather than simply accepting the first answer and moving on. Much more student talk as a result. And yet, my lessons remain far too teacher-centred. It seems that at my school, children are deemed 'good' if they're being silent. Obviously I have to fit in with my supervising teacher's style of management, but it is somewhat counter-intuitive that students should be silent when learning a language.”

Finally, the task is important in positioning a research activity within pre-service teacher education, engaging pre-service teachers actively in the development of research-led evidence-based teaching.

5. Limitations of the study

We must also acknowledge that there was some criticism of the task. Pair Group A1 said they found it more difficult to analyse exchanges they could not read especially if no translation was supplied. (Our two teacher education degree programs prepare language teachers generically, and classes are made up of pre-service language teachers who will teach one or two languages from a possible 11 different languages other than English.) This highlights a potential limitation of our methodology where we were working with a limited number of real-life transcripts that we had, in French, Italian, Japanese and Spanish, while working with groups of pre-service teachers who represented a greater range of languages.

Two Group A pre-service teachers found that *“The task was too long, I was disappointed they didn't have my language Chinese. And they didn't have English translation for everything, and some English is jumbled up in the text. If it's in our teaching language, it's easier, you can judge it better”*. Pre-service teachers would clearly value the opportunity to engage with this task with examples from their teaching language. It would therefore be valuable to gather some transcript data in a wider range of languages to be able to strengthen this task with the diverse sets of pre-service teachers that we train.

As well, we believe we need to explain our choice to train two groups who were not “like” groups. Group A pre-service teachers had considerable background knowledge of language teaching methodology, and had already completed a school practicum. Group B had had seven weeks of engagement with language teaching methodology but no teaching practice at the time of data collection. This will explain the differences in the Group members' abilities to complete the task, as the researchers did find that Group A's pre-service teachers had a more solid understanding of intercultural notions. In a future iteration of the research, it may be useful to conduct the training with University B pre-service teachers later on in their teacher education. Having said that, the aim of the research was not to compare whether the two teacher training models were producing pre-service teachers who could undertake the task, it was, as mentioned, purely to find out whether pre-service teacher training was possible.

6. Conclusion

This study has examined the use of a training intervention in the use of questioning, and the I-R-E turn, designed to raise awareness and skills in questioning, in pre-service language teachers. The pedagogical purpose of this was to highlight the power of enquiry questions to

elicit and construct intercultural language learning in learners. The study taught the pre-service teachers how to recognize the linguistic turn in classroom discourse transcripts, and to analyse the resultant learning culture in the classroom. The study found that this strategy is most effectively conducted with pre-service language teachers who already have classroom experience. With this knowledge of classroom talk, they are able to identify the linguistic turn more easily, construct a richer interpretation of classroom interaction, and create more from the task. The task itself has been shown to be an intercultural exercise, with pre-service teachers from different educational backgrounds bringing different cultural perspectives to the task.

We have noted that participants in both Groups A and B struggled with the labels themselves, the I-R-E. Participants suggested that the I-R-E labels are inadequate to describe the interactions occurring in an inclusive intercultural dialogue. Overall we saw that the three labels do not sufficiently interpret the interaction in language classrooms that is complex and unpredictable. When a teacher is seeking to explore the intercultural there are a lot of different forms of questioning and forms of role-reversal between teacher and learners in the classroom. This may indicate a limitation in the methodology of the study, in that our training course implied that pre-service teachers would find a clear-cut answer to the labeling of I-R-E, and that they had to be able to label the turns. However the core purpose of our design was to elicit critical discussion of transcripts amongst the pre-service teachers. It achieved this and has led to much further discussion and trial and error for the pre-service teachers in their own classroom practice. This is evidenced by the email response from one pre-service teacher as he began to engage in classroom practice.

We believe that the task could be widely and effectively used in pre-service language teacher education, in the development of teacher questioning skills for intercultural learning. It is a key tool in teachers moving towards an intercultural stance in their pedagogy. In further planned iterations of this training task, the pre-service teachers may benefit from a more in-depth investigation into an expanded repertoire of the I-R-E labels prior to engaging with examples. We submit that new labeling and linguistic investigation of the intercultural exchange are needed to frame new patterns in intercultural discourse.

7. References

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APPENDIX

Think Aloud Activity: Concurrent verbal reporting

In the right hand column : Please read the text, discuss, and identify I (initiation) R (response) E (evaluation) occurring in these classroom exchanges between teacher (T) and students (S). What do you notice about the exchanges, the language, the pattern of responses?

	Text	Framing IRE?
T	<i>Pero tambien en Espana</i> we talked about that punctuality, <i>la puntualidad en Espana. Cuando te invitan y te dicen que tienes que venir a las nueve a que hora llegas? Llegas a las nueve y quince. Llegas tarde. Te invitan a tomar una copa o unas tapas, puedes llegar hasta una hora mas tarde.</i> (Translation: But also, in Spain, we talked about that punctuality. When they invite you over and tell you to come at nine, what time do you arrive? You come at nine fifteen. You arrive late. They invite you for a drink or some tapas, you can arrive up to an hour late.)	
S	If you're like meeting with friends for like, at a café or whatever, Oh! But wouldn't you find it annoying?	
T	<i>You</i> would find it annoying. <i>We</i> would find it annoying. You might get there at quarter past six and for us that is late! But you sit there and an hour later people turn up and nobody will be offended!	
S	How late would you have to be for them to like actually be offended? Just not go?	
T	Well if you don't go, you would send a message.	
S	But like how late?	
T	I think 2 hours is kind of the limit. Or patience for people to say ok I've just had enough.	
S	Its not like rude ? you're really relaxed if you turn up late and then they're like "oh that's fine"?	