

Intercultural Competence in a Multilingual World: Policies—Research—Language Education

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1. Introduction

Plurilingualism in Europe has many facets and the challenges for linguistic policies are manifold: The twenty-three official European languages need to have a substantial group of proficient speakers in each of the countries of the EU, so that people of every member state feel fully respected and not marginalised by the integration of their country into the European Union; the large number of regional and minority languages need to be protected and promoted; and the innumerable immigrant languages present in European societies also need to be recognized and integrated into a general language policy. Moreover, important languages from other continents, such as Chinese, are inevitably playing a growing role in European societies.

At the same time, all these languages are inseparably interlinked with cultural traditions, worldviews and historical memories and form a very important part of the cultural identity of their speakers. Language learning therefore should be cultural but also ethical learning. It is thus not surprising—as it is also very important to the process of integration and social cohesion—that, in recent European and international policies promoting intercultural dialogue, intercultural education and democratic citizenship, language education has been seen as one of the key competence areas. Language learning is often connected with ethical and attitudinal development such as tolerance towards otherness and is arguably a key element in people becoming aware of their own prejudices, and relativizing and decentering from their often unconscious cultural imprint.

As I will show in my paper, there are nevertheless quite important challenges within this field. The concept of intercultural competences in language policies sometimes—from a scientific perspective—is vague, and the question how intercultural learning processes can be empirically described is far from being answered. At the same time, practitioners tend to put much weight on communicative competences which are much easier to assess. On the basis of recent interdisciplinary research I will give an outline of the latest developments within this field, especially with regard to the question of assessment and empirical investigations of intercultural learning and development. Finally, as I will demonstrate, the establishment of Chinese in school curricula in European countries could play an important role in fostering intercultural competences not only within but also beyond Europe.

2. Linguistic and cultural diversity in Europe

Integration, enlargement and search for identity are the three most essential aspects of contemporary European politics. Issues such as common internal market, the opening of national borders, a common currency, the harmonisation of education systems and performance standards etc. —all these characterise the process of European integration, which poses a great challenge to the individual countries whose traditions are nationally rooted. As far as 'enlargement' is concerned, one can say that the EU-27 is not only presenting a challenge in terms of politics and economy but also and especially constitutes a huge task in terms of language policy: regardless of minority languages, the Union now counts 23 official languages, which—as is the case in the Council of the European Union in Brussels—result in an increased interpreting activity while at the same arousing a debate about English as lingua franca. And finally as far as 'search for identity' is concerned: Europe

has been desperately searching for orientation, lacking a common role model beyond the fundamental values of democracy, rule of law, the respect of human rights and protecting minorities. As the community grows larger, it becomes increasingly difficult to define an underlying cultural and historical identity that all societies have in common. Hence, plurilingualism and the readiness to learn languages becomes more and more a characteristic of European linguistic and cultural identity. The Swiss writer Adolf Muschg puts it this way:

'More generally, European political culture depends strongly on the curiosity and the interest of the members towards one another. Europe is a project of political culture. (...) The most reliable vector of European hospitality is the willingness to learn one, or even better, two languages beside the own and the ineluctable English. Because each foreign language holds a different perception of the world and because embracing the other enriches the self.'

The European Commission is fully aware of the problem and has been advocating a policy of multilingualism (instead of bilingualism) for more than 10 years. In the *White Paper on Teaching and Learning: Towards the Learning Society* (European Commission 1995, 47) the forth general objective is the proficiency in three community languages:

'In line with the resolution of the Council Education Ministers of 31 March 1995, it is becoming necessary for everyone, irrespective of training and education routes chosen, to be able to acquire and keep up their ability to communicate in at least two Community languages in addition to their mother tongue.'

This language policy is not merely motivated by economic necessities: the EU has also realised that its citizens can only accept the process of European integration if it means that their native language will be legitimised and recognised, promoted and used beyond the 'national ghetto', so to speak, and as an integral part of European development. Each national language should be promoted and offered to other EU-nationals as a foreign language. This is the only way to achieve participation in democratic processes:

To neglect a language is to run the risk of seeing its speakers becoming disenchanted with the European project. People cannot be expected to be wholeheartedly behind Europe unless they feel that their specific culture, and primarily their language, is fully respected and that the integration of their country in the European Union contributes to the flourishing of their language and culture rather than marginalising them. So many of the crises we have witnessed in Europe and elsewhere stem from the fact that a community has sometime in the past felt that its language was not respected; we have to remain careful to head off such feelings from emerging in the decades ahead, for they would undermine European cohesion. (European Commission 2008, p. 12)

However, other factors make the linguistic situation in Europe even more complex: there is also a large number of European languages, that are not granted the status of official language and are sometimes misleadingly called 'less used languages/langues moins répandues'. These terms are inaccurate indeed because the number of speakers of Catalan for instance is actually higher than that of Danish. And yet, Catalan does not have the status of official language. In addition to this, there is a wide variety referred to as 'migrant languages' used by speakers who live in Europe as a result of labour migration, search for asylum and globalisation. In this context, the aforementioned EU recommendation of proficiency in two community languages—i.e. recognised languages of the EU—in addition to the mother tongue becomes confusing: which language is to be considered the 'mother tongue' in this case? Should this language be learned and preserved even if it is not a community language but is a minority or migrant language?

Besides: Also non European languages such as Arabic, Chinese or Hindi play a significant role in a globalised world, in economy and science. They should therefore be increasingly taught in future and be part of the European language map. In recent policies (see Council of Europe 2007) this comprehensive view of plurilingualism has been much more focused on, and a concept of plurilingualism which includes minority languages, immigrant languages and languages of other parts of the world is enhanced:

'All language varieties, whether "national", "indigenous", "(im)migrant" or "non-European" need to be recognised as "languages of Europe" and their presence in whatever form in compulsory schooling and beyond

assured. Only in this way can an education for plurilingualism and plurilingual awareness, and the development of a sense of being a European citizen replace the identification of languages with national identities only.' (Council of Europe 2007, 15)

Furthermore, linguistic diversity cannot be considered without reference to cultural diversity. *Language, culture and identity* are intrinsically interlinked: *language* is not conceivable without *culture* and *identity*, *culture* not conceivable without *language* and *identity*, and lastly, *identity* is definitely coupled with *language* and *culture* (cp. Kramersch 1998, Hu 2003, p. 98). In a European-Chinese context, the Chinese author François Cheng provides in his book 'Le Dialogue. Une passion pour la langue française' (2002) a striking example of this. Languages to him—in this case Chinese and French—are not seen as mere media of communication but as a means to construct self-identity. In his book, he describes the change of his identity as a consequence of learning French, while at the same time he remains aware of the constant and very important role of his first language Chinese. He describes himself as a man in a constant internal dialogue, taking multidimensional perspectives:

Henceforth inhabited by the other language, without the inner dialogue within him ceasing, the man of blended underground waters savours the privileged state of being constantly himself and other than himself or even prior to himself. On his encounter with things, he experiences the sensation of benefiting from a 'stereophonic' or 'stereoscopic' approach; his perspective is bound to be multidimensional.

This strong link between language, culture and identity makes clear that language learning always includes cultural learning, and that linguistic competences go together with intercultural competences.

Let me summarise this far: A glance at the European language map reveals a mixture of intense complexity: official languages, national languages, regional languages, dialects as well as autochthonous, allochthonous and migrant languages and finally important non European languages: all these languages joint together result in a wide linguistic and cultural variety. Language and intercultural learning and holistic language policies which include all the languages spoken in Europe play an increasingly crucial role for European/global integration and democratic citizenship. As language, culture and identity are interwoven, language learning involves cultural learning, and linguistic competences must include intercultural competences.

3. An example: Languages in Hamburg

What is the relevance of this linguistic and cultural complexity on the local level? By way of example, I propose to describe very briefly the situation in Hamburg, a city in northern Germany with around 1.800.000 inhabitants. As a survey study in the Hamburg primary schools shows (see Fürstenau, Gogolin & Yagmur 2003), the linguistic diversity especially among children and adolescents is impressive: 90 different languages were identified (see the table below), the most wide spread language being Turkish, followed by Polish and Russian, Chinese lying in 20th position with 126 children of Chinese origin. This linguistic and simultaneously cultural diversity not only constitutes an immense challenge for teachers and school policies, it also contains a huge potential for social, cultural and economic development.

Sprache	Anzahl	Sprache	Anzahl
1. Türkisch	4997	11. Portugiesisch	388
2. Polnisch	1742	12. Griechisch	307
3. Russisch	1686	13. Akan/Twi/'Ghanaisch'	301
4. Englisch	1097	14. Französisch	242
5. Dari/Pashto/'Afghanisch'	976	15. Urdu	240
6. Farsi	925	16. Romanes	239
7. Serbisch/Kroatisch/Bosnisch	586	17. Kurdisch	208
8. Arabisch	490	18. Italienisch	202
9. Spanisch	457	19. Vietnamesisch	159
10. Albanisch	417	20. Chinesisch	126

(Continued)

21. Armenisch	93	56. Sranan Tongo	4
22. Thailändisch	58	57. Georgisch	3
23. Tagalog/'Philippinisch'	54	58. Hausa	3
24. Dänisch	47	59. Lao	3
25. Aramäisch/Syrisch	44	60. Lingala	3
26. Rumänisch	42	61. Benin-Togo	3
27. Niederländisch	39	62. Schweizerdeutsch	3
28. Makedonisch	34	63. Afrikaans	2
29. Hind(ustan)i	33	64. Estnisch	2
30. Japanisch	33	65. Ewe	2
31. Ungarisch	32	66. Ibo	2
32. Tschechisch	28	67. Isländisch	2
33. Koreanisch	26	68. Lasisch	2
34. Schwedisch	26	69. Mina	2
35. Bahasa/Indonesisch	25	70. Mongolisch	2
36. Bulgarisch	17	71. Usbekisch	2
37. Litauisch	15	72. Slowenisch	2
38. Finnisch	13	73. Swaheli	2
39. Maltesisch	11	74. Abchasisch	1
40. Malaiisch	11	75. Balinesisch	1
41. Norwegisch	11	76. Berber	1
42. Ukrainisch	11	77. Bete	1
43. Tschetschenisch	11	78. Bundu	1
44. Aseri/Aserbaidshanisch	9	79. Fula	1
45. Bengali	9	80. Jiddisch	1
46. Katalanisch	9	81. Kapverdisch	1
47. Tigrinya/'Eritreisch'	8	82. Kandahar	1
48. Lettisch	7	83. Krio	1
49. Turoyo-Aramäisch	7	84. Miship	1
50. Amharisch/'Äthiopisch'	6	85. Schottisch	1
51. Hebräisch/Ivrit	6	86. Sindhi	1
52. Wolof/'Senegalisch'	5	87. Temein	1
53. Zaza	5	88. Tscherkessisch	1
54. Kasachisch	4	89. Turkmenisch	1
55. Slowakisch	4	90. Yoruba	1
Total			16639

Figure 1: Languages in Hamburg primary schools (Fürstenau, Gogolin & Yagmur 2003, 49)

It is interesting to look at which languages are officially taught as regular school languages in the city of Hamburg: obviously, German as 'mother tongue' is predominantly the basic language of schooling (beside special immersion and bilingual programme which become more and more popular), English is taught from the first year in every school, followed by French, Latin, and Spanish as second or third languages. Furthermore, Italian, Russian, Chinese, Portuguese, Arabic, Japanese and Hebrew are offered as second or third foreign language in several schools. Due to the large number of immigrant pupils, German as a second language is offered in special courses, and also the so called 'heritage language education' (Turkish, Russian, Arabic) plays

an important role within the school system. Comparison of the inherited linguistic situation of the children and the languages offered in the schools, demonstrates that the usual distinction between migration languages and foreign languages taught at school is becoming increasingly obsolescent.

4. Policies on intercultural education and dialogue

Recently, on the European, but also global level, important policies have been published marking the connection between language education and intercultural education. For example, the UNESCO guidelines on Intercultural Education (UNESCO 2006) emphasise the major role of education in general but of intercultural education in particular in promoting social cohesion and peaceful coexistence. Beside the teaching of history and education about religions, the learning of languages is seen as a crucial element of Intercultural Education, mainly because of their strong interconnection with culture and identity (p. 19). In a similar way, the Council of Europe stresses in its 'White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue' (Council of Europe 2008, p. 16) the important role of language and intercultural education:

'Language learning helps learners to avoid stereotyping individuals, to develop curiosity and openness to otherness and to discover other cultures. Language learning helps them to see that interaction with individuals having different social identities and cultures is an enriching experience.'

Likewise—to mention an example on the national level—the Educational Standards for the first foreign language set by the Conference of Ministers of Education and Culture (Kultusministerkonferenz 2003) strongly emphasises intercultural competences within the context of language learning. More than ever before, the concept of intercultural competence has become—on a normative level in curricula—an important objective. In the German Educational Standards for language learning, the development of intercultural competence is considered a 'common task for the entire school, to which foreign language teaching can bring a particular contribution'. In this document, it is also stated that 'pupils experience, through the capacity to compare their own perspectives, values and social structures with those of other cultures in a tolerant and critical manner, an increase in understanding and strengthening their own identity' (Kultusministerkonferenz 2003: 11). Similar sentiments can be found in other countries, for example in this extract from a French policy document (Ministère de la jeunesse, de l'éducation nationale et de la recherche 2005):

'Insofar as the learning of a foreign language involves acquiring knowledge of one or more other cultures, it gives access to other customs, other ways of thinking, other values. To learn a foreign language means learning to respect the other in his/her otherness, it creates a sense of the relative, and the spirit of tolerance, two values which are particular required today as the school community develops towards being a multicultural community.'

At the policy level, the general tendency clearly favours internationalization (see Hu & Byram 2009, VIII). Key concepts in all these policies are: education for tolerance, broadmindedness, respect, mutual understanding, intercultural dialogue, acceptance, change of perspective, 'decentring'. But—as we shall see later—from a scientific perspective these concepts and objectives remain vague and fuzzy, unless there is more empirical research and empirical evidence on intercultural learning processes.

5. Models of intercultural competence

There are a number of approaches to modelling intercultural competence, as surveyed by Spitzberg and Changnon (2009), from a number of disciplinary origins. In the domain of education and language pedagogy, Michael Byram (1997) developed a model of 'intercultural communicative competence', containing five dimensions, namely *savoirs*, *savoir apprendre*, *savoir comprendre/faire*, *savoir être* and *savoir s'engager*. Up to the present, this model has enjoyed high popularity worldwide; many young scholars use this model as their theoretical base (cf. Eberhardt 2008). Byram defines *savoirs* as knowledge of social groups and their products

and practices in one's own and in one's interlocutor's country, and of the general processes of societal and individual interaction (Byram 1997, 58). *Savoir comprendre* is defined as 'the ability to interpret a document or event from another culture, to explain it and relate it to documents or events from one's own (Byram 1997, 61). *Savoir apprendre/faire* is the 'skill of discovery and interaction: ability to acquire new knowledge of a culture and cultural practices and the ability to operate knowledge, attitudes and skills under the constraints of real time communication and interaction' (Byram 1997, 61). *Savoir s'engager* is described as 'critical cultural awareness/ political education: an ability to evaluate, critically and on the basis of explicit criteria, perspectives, practices and products in one's own and other cultures and countries' (Byram 1997, 63). Finally, *savoir-être* is defined as 'curiosity and openness, readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and belief about one's own' (Byram, 1997, p.57). These savoirs, combined with linguistic, sociolinguistic and discourse competences form, what he calls, intercultural communicative competence (see figure below; for the function and meaning of models in this context and the new approach of the Autobiography of Intercultural Encounters see Byram 2009; Council of Europe 2009).

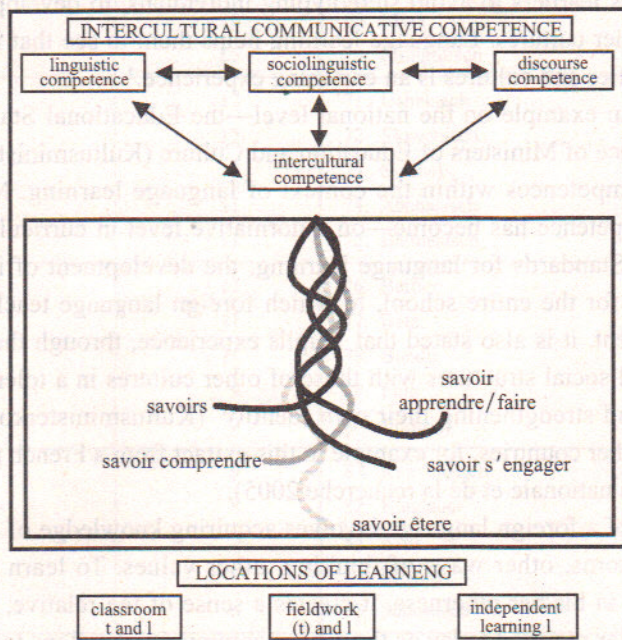


Figure 2: Intercultural Communicative Competence (Byram 1997, 73)

Another model which originally comes from the psychological and not the educational or linguistic field, but which has recently also been used for evaluations and measurements within the language context¹, is the 'Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity' by Milton J. Bennett (Bennett 1986, Bennett, Bennett & Allen 1999). This model is based on the concept of a fundamental difference between cultures; according to Bennett, recognising this difference is the precondition of intercultural sensitivity.² His developmental model is seen as a continuum, divided in six stages of development. Each stage represents a way of experiencing difference. It is basically divided into two sets of stages, Ethnocentric and Ethnorelative (see figure below). In the ethnocentric phase, 'people unconsciously experience their own cultures as central to reality. They

1. See the DESI-study: A large scale study in which a stratified sample of 10,000 grade 9 pupils were tested on their competences in English and German, and where intercultural competences have also been measured (cf. Hesse, Göbel & Jude 2008)
 2. In culture theory, this kind of culture concept has been criticised by many, saying that cultures are dynamic, interrelated and hybrid, see e.g. Hannerz 1992, Hu 2003, 52-78, Risager 2009.

therefore avoid the idea of cultural difference as an implicit or explicit threat to the reality of their own cultural experience' (Bennett, Bennett, Allen 1999, 248), while in the ethnorelative phase, 'people consciously recognise that all behaviour exists in cultural context, including their own' (Bennett, Bennett & Allen 1999, 248). Bennett divides the ethnocentric phase into three different stages: denial, defense and minimisation; the ethnorelative phase into acceptance, adaptation and integration. For him, this model is a developmental model, 'because it assumes that issues at each stage need to be resolved in some way before the learner can move on to deal with more complex issues at later stages' (p. 246). Nevertheless, as will be shown in the next paragraph, this normative idea of stages and development is problematic.

6. Challenges for research

In May 2008, an international and interdisciplinary symposium on the theme 'Intercultural Competences and Language Learning Models, Empiricism and Evaluation' took place in the University of Hamburg. The main results of this symposium have been published in Hu & Byram 2009. The authors have addressed the most urgent questions concerning intercultural competence and language learning, mainly on the basis of empirical research from psychological, educational and linguistic perspectives. Despite the existing models and the research that has been done so far, the most important open questions and challenges are the following:

6.1 Concepts of culture and epistemological premises

Different concepts of culture are evident as throughout the research literature. The central question is not only a matter of conceptualising culture as a dynamic and heterogeneous system—in contrast to images of homogenous and separable cultures. It is the way in which culture is understood epistemologically which is more decisive: either as constantly recreated or as an entity to be defined from the outside. Above all in interdisciplinary discourse it is necessary to make explicit the theoretical premises—not least with respect to the cultural perspectives of the researchers themselves. In this respect it is particularly interesting to consider how far essentialist and difference-orientated or homogenising concepts of culture (Bennett being a clear example of difference orientation) are acceptable according to context and function—for example in pedagogical contexts. Some authors (e.g. Risager 2009,) argue for a pragmatic approach to the concept of culture. On the other hand there remains the question of whether this means that we would trail behind acknowledged concepts in cultural theory, and whether there ought to be—in the context of intercultural learning too—differentiation and reflection on a theoretical level about central concepts such as 'culture', 'stereotype', own/foreign, 'understanding' etc.

6.2 On the relationships among separate components of intercultural competence

In many approaches there is a consensus about the fact that intercultural competence consists of various components. The rough distinctions of attitudinal, knowledge and behavioural components are common. Despite this consensus, there are multiple open questions. Are the components each indispensable? In which synergetic combination are they considered to be adequate in order to guarantee competent intercultural actions? Are they hierarchically organised? If so, how would they be weighted? How should the semantic, pragmatic, and empirical relation between the components be determined? In which kind of learning processes (e.g. biographic-episodic) do they develop and do they develop separately or in parallel? To which extent can they be fostered through instruction? Further research should consider for example the relationship between knowledge about a country—for instance its political, historical or geographical facts—and attitudes towards it; under which conditions does knowledge correlate with positive attitudes?

On the other hand, educationists may decide that some level of pedagogical simplification is needed in curriculum planning and implementation, and research which considers relationships among components of intercultural and communicative/linguistic competence would support the decision-making in curriculum design.

6.3 On the relationship of linguistic competence and intercultural competences

An interdisciplinary vision is particularly helpful in showing how differently these two aspects of competence are seen. As Mughan (2009) shows, intercultural competence research in the context of business communication is characterised by a consistent lack of attention to the linguistic component. Questions such as: In which language does communication take place? What influence does lingua franca communication have on the conversation process? are not debated here. Intercultural competence appears as a competence which is separated from (foreign) language and communicative competence. This disregard of the language aspect is difficult to accept from a discourse theoretical and foreign language teaching viewpoint. As Göller argues, 'Human sense-making, intra—or intercultural communication and interaction (...) is above all connected to language or is mediated through language. This is the case for all forms of intra- and intercultural exchange. Language and culture are closely interwoven' (2000: 330f).

The other extreme is found in Bennett, Bennett and Allen (2003: 255) where the foreign language level and the stages of intercultural sensitivity in Bennett's model are placed in direct relationship with each other and thus the beginner in a foreign language typically presents ethnocentric attitudes. This too is difficult to accept since intercultural competences are not dependent on foreign language competences alone. Furthermore the relationship between linguistic competence development and the development of attitudes to cultural otherness has not yet been empirically investigated. A further research question should focus on the relationship between multilingualism which is unsystematically acquired through migration on the one hand, and intercultural competences on the other.

6.4 On the problem of developmental models of intercultural competence

A closer look at Bennett's model introduced above shows that there remains a number of unanswered questions needing further research. In how far does Bennett's proposal of stages which have to be traversed, from ethnocentrism to ethno-relativism, pre-suppose that this is universal? In Bennett, Bennett and Allen (2003: 246), it is claimed that

'The model is developmental because it assumes that issues at each stage need to be resolved in some way before the learner can move on to deal with more complex issues at later stages.'

But at what age and in which learning context does the model begin? Who are the learners involved? Students or younger pupils? What about learners with a migration background, or with a bilingual or multilingual background? In how far is the attitude towards cultural difference dependent on what kind of cultural difference is involved? In how far is a strong differentiation relevant? There is in addition to these basic questions the decisive question concerning what kind of experiences, insights or cognitive gains under what conditions lead to a change in attitudes. Further research is also urgently needed here in order to describe differentiated and context dependent learning processes.

Another central question concerning developmental models of intercultural competences concerns the normative premises inherent in the models themselves (cf. Byram 2009). To what extent are we dealing with a normative term which rules out the possibility of confrontations, aversions and breaching of rules? How are undesired learning effects dealt with? To what extent are even the implicit moral norms culturally specific? In this regard, future work carried out in cooperation with researchers from different parts of the world is of great significance in order to relativise (euro-centric or western) norms, not least in the models with universal claims.

7. Chinese as a foreign language in Germany: a special case for the fostering of intercultural competences

In Europe, Chinese is no longer considered a 'luxury' subject and more and more people learn this language—not only in universities and language schools, but also in public schools. In the German speaking countries (Germany, Austria, Switzerland), around 10,000 people study Chinese not only in universities, but

also in secondary schools, adult education centers and private language schools. In France, Chinese is even more popular (Fachverband Chinesisch e.V. 2009).

In Germany, Chinese is taught in 44 secondary schools. Pupils can choose it as either a second or third foreign language. In addition, approximately 200 secondary schools offer Chinese as an extracurricular activity. Also in six primary schools Chinese is taught. Seven federal states include Chinese in their curricula, which in the prevailing context of school policy are considerably influenced by the Common European Framework of Reference (developed originally for European languages). Thus, Chinese has found its place among the school languages (Kultusministerkonferenz 2008).

In most cases, the teaching staff are native speakers or sinologists without teacher training qualification. Sometimes they are teachers for other subjects but have learned Chinese autodidactically. There are no teacher education programmes for Chinese as a foreign language at German universities, but there are optimistic tendencies. At the University of Göttingen, the first professorship for the teaching of Chinese as a foreign language will be established soon (in cooperation with the Office of Chinese Language Council International 'Hanban'), and also in other universities—like Hamburg—a teacher education for Chinese as a school subject is planned.

Chinese is often learnt for economic reasons, the cultural dimension and the potential for intercultural competence has so far been neglected. For Europeans, to learn Chinese means gaining access to a world in which learners' own culture must, to a certain extent, be relativised and challenged. To give an example, even literate Europeans would not be able to readily quote outstanding Chinese personalities like Du Fu, Zhu Xi or concepts like *xiao* (filial duty) or *guocui* (could be translated as 'national essence') (cf. Guder 2009).

Intercultural competence is and must be essential in the area of Chinese studies. As Guder puts it, 'even though it is not a measurable competence, it is an immeasurably valuable one for the education of thinking world citizens' (Guder 2009, 829). For the benefit of the generations to come, Europe needs to strengthen teaching and research to enable the relaying of knowledge of Chinese language and culture. Appropriate academic structures, courses to qualify teachers, translators and interpreters are necessary, to transcend the limits of today's Chinese studies drawing on the latest work in linguistics, translation studies, cultural studies and educational science. On the other hand, the learning and teaching of European languages beside English in China, can be an enriching experience for similar reasons and will contribute immensely to improve mutual understanding. The conference in Beijing was an important step in this direction.

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