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EDUCATION: FOSTERING THE INTERCULTURAL AGENDA
Transatlantic talk: a web-mediated discussion on literary texts between teacher students

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“It gave me ideas how to think”. Swedish student

Abstract
Reading fiction from other cultures may open doors for new perspectives. The aim of this empirical case study was to learn if and how a cross-cultural web-based asynchronous interactive conversation may promote intercultural awareness. This was done by providing teacher students from Sweden and the US with two fictional texts, one from each country, to be discussed on a web platform according to a set task. The study shows that the web-discussion increased the students’ critical cultural awareness. In further studies the choice of literary texts, student instructions, time management, communication language and medium have to be considered more thoroughly.

Introduction and aims
A rapidly changing society is constantly reminding us of global interdependence and the demand for understanding otherness. Today more than ever teachers must become aware of their roles as mediators between cultures. A rising interest in education for global citizenship (Trotta, Jacott & Lundgren, 2008) in multicultural and internationalised societies has emerged in teacher education in many countries.

However a well known fact is that visions are easy to write but mean little unless put into practice. In our project we have tried to illustrate the educational idea of intercultural understanding to students from an American and a Swedish group of teacher students. As they were participating in each a mandatory course with an intercultural agenda they naturally wanted to experience exemplary educational methods in practice. Besides the
objective of personal, intercultural awareness the project was to serve as a pedagogical model for the students possible to use in their future teaching career.

E-communication is cheap, flexible and easily accessible in a large part of the world. Authentic intercultural encounters are within reach without having to leave school or home. Thus this type of communication has great potential for intercultural learning.

This potential connected to reading literature (Nussbaum, 1997) is the research object of my study. What we wanted to know was if a web-based, asynchronic, interactive conversation across the Atlantic in practice could promote intercultural understanding among pre-service teachers. Is this procedure, used for discussing fictional texts a way to create an intercultural learning process?

The fictions were a pre-requisite for getting any data for the study. However the focus of the study is not on the fictional texts, not even on the discussion on the fictional texts but on the readers’ texts. I am interested in how the sharing of different readings triggered new comments and reflections and made the participants discover new perspectives- if they became aware of new things about themselves in mirroring their own experiences to those of the others.

Theoretical background

Culture

As this project took place in a cross-cultural context the concept of culture has to be defined. Culture includes nation, gender, class, race, ethnicity, physical ability, age, sexual preferences etc. The concept of culture is defined by Brian Street as a meaning making process not as a state of things.

In fact there is not much point in trying to say what culture is. What can be done, however, is to say what culture does. For what culture does is precisely the work of defining words, ideas, things and groups. We all live our lives in terms of definitions, names and categories that culture creates. The job of studying culture is not of finding and then accepting its definitions but of discovering how and what definitions are made, under what circumstances and for what reasons. These definitions are used, change and sometimes fall into disuse. Indeed, the very term ‘culture’ itself, like these other ideas and definitions, changes its meanings and serve different often competing purposes at different times. Culture is an active process of meaning making and contest over definition, including its own definition. This, then, is what I mean by arguing that Culture is a verb (Street 1993, p. 25).

The concept of culture not only applies to nation but to ethnicity, gender, class, age
social background and to other variables concerning life style and conditions of life.

**Intercultural competence**

One theoretical starting point underpinning the study is regarding intercultural communication as education not as training. The educational objective is *intercultural competence (IC)* consisting of knowledge, skills and attitudes (Byram, 1997). He argues that there is a cognitive as well as an affective dimension to IC. According to Byram’s theory IC consists of

- Knowledge
- Skills
- Attitudes
- Critical cultural awareness

As I see it Byram includes among other things the following to the IC:

- Curiosity and openness
- Knowledge about oneself and the other
- Skills to interpret and relate what you encounter to your own culture
- An ability to use the knowledge you have acquired in practice
- An ability to question your own values

Intercultural competence can be used for many purposes. It can be used for commercial and political purposes to gain profits or advantages but teachers see it as a way to develop intercultural understanding, respect for otherness and to question your own values.

**Learning and communication**

The study also draws on *dialogue theory* based on Bakhtin, Rommetveit and Dysthe (2002). The interactivity in the web-mediated discussions is assumed to carry an intercultural learning potential.

According to *socio-cultural theory* originating in Vygotskian thinking and cooperative learning, where students learn in interaction with others and the environment, the web based discussion is a type of Computer Supported Collaborative Learning (CSCL) which is a relevant paradigm (Koschman, 1996; Dysthe 2002).
Third space

The term third space was coined by Homi Bhabha (1992) in Cultural Studies. Claire Kramsch (1993) and others in the field of Applied Linguistics prefers to speak about third place. The two terms have been widely used in various disciplines e.g. culture, language and literature. They imply the area that appears when two cultures meet and both surpass their own borders creating a sort of hybrid space. It is “a place in-between” that belongs to no one; neither the more dominant group or the lesser known or esteemed group. Ana Matos (2004) has argued for the role of literature as an introduction to the third space drawing on Kramsch.

The study

Texts

The students’ discussions were based on two pieces of fiction, extracts from an American and a Swedish novel. These books are part of the literary canon in their respective countries. They are drawn from the authors’ own experiences and tell about growing up as a minority child within a majority society. The American text chosen by my colleague was The House on Mango Street by Sandra Cisneros. It is introduced by the publisher and Amazon.com on the web as

_Told in a series of vignettes stunning for their eloquence, The House on Mango Street is Sandra Cisneros’s greatly admired novel of a young girl growing up in the Latino section of Chicago. Acclaimed by critics, beloved by children, their parents and grandparents, taught everywhere from inner-city grade schools to universities across the country, and translated all over the world, it has entered the canon of coming-of-age classics._

The Swedish text was an extract from Mikael Niemi’s Popular Music. His text was written in Swedish but for obvious reasons we used an English version. The fact that this book is translated implies mediation, from author through interpreter to reader.

_When a Beatles record falls into the hands of 11-year-old Matti, neither he nor his home village of Pajala, Sweden, will ever be the same. It is the early 1960s, and both Matti and Pajala are about to enter adolescence. This is a beautiful, poignant, often very funny novel about growing up in a remote area. Niemi writes with real poetry as he strings together the culturally rich vignettes of Matti’s experiences, snapshots of childhood that are at the same time intensely personal and universal (Paula Luedtke, American Library Association)._
Participating students

Students were registered in two Teacher Education courses:

- Sweden: Cultural Encounters—compulsory course for undergraduate education. The course was offered both in Swedish and English, the data was collected with the English option.
- USA: Language/Culture: Issues for Practitioners—compulsory course for the Program Specialist: English as a Second Language Certificate

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Students’ assignment

The students were given the following instructions:

1. Read the texts (handouts) and start a personal log (includes 2, 3, 4)
   Write your short personal response to the texts as key words or key sentences (use it for your own thinking and include it in the log)
2. Pick about 3 sentences or short passages from each text that you think are important. Give the reasons why you chose them. Publish in PingPong.
3. Exchange with your overseas net partner(s) your ideas and reflections that have emerged from your reading of the texts as well as a response to their/his/her ideas, 3-5 postings from each student
4. Reflect upon your partner’s/partners’ reading of the text in comparison with your own, how the discussion with your partner clarified/confused your own experience of the text (Please leave out any reflections on potential technical difficulties) This is an individual reflective piece of writing (2-3 pages)
5. Hand in as an assignment
   - Personal log of web discussion (2-4)
   - Reflective piece of writing (5)
The time schedule was very tight:

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Students interactive web conversation, some examples

Different kinds of entries

Some entries were monologic, others caused one or several comments from one or several participants. Some entries grew and branched out to a network or web. This is an example:

1. Reader A picks a sentence from the literary text and giving motivation for her/his personal choice, submits an entry.
2. Reader B comments on 1
3. Reader A comments on 2
4. Reader C (D; E ...) joins in etc

Themes

A number of themes can be discerned

- Growing up
- Friendship
- Brothers and sister
- To be a teacher
- Language and communication

The themes were often commented on by the students from the point of view of cultural and personal differences. Lack of space only allows me to present two themes in detail. To differentiate citations from the fictional texts from the students’ comments, the latter are in italics.

Growing up and friendship

Personal experiences, like memories of childhood were triggered by the text. The students showed identification with the literary characters and their stories. Through this several participants became aware of the different social conditions the group had experienced during childhood. Their open attitudes and their respect for the reactions
of the other I consider as examples of intercultural understanding

Someday I will have a best friend all my own. One I can tell my secrets to or who understands my jokes without having me to explain them. ...Until then I am a red balloon, a balloon tied to an anchor (Mango Street).

I could relate to this passage because I have a sister and even though there are some similar things about us, we are different, as different as night and day. I have always longed for a friend like a sister. One who listens to secrets and is not only a sister, but a friend. One who you would truly want to be your maid of honor in your wedding. I have never had this until recently. I am in my early 40’s and now I have a friend that I feel close to. I understand the comment that I am a red balloon. I am ready to fly, but my sister is anchoring me down. I do not get the support from her that allows me to fly. I am civil with my sister, but I would not tell her my innermost thought /Tina.

I thought it was really interesting to read about the girl’s longing for a best friend and how you recognized yourself in her thoughts. I did not think about that at all when I read the passage in the book, but that´s because I have such good contact with my two older sisters and I can really understand your thoughts! It’s amazing to have such good contact with a sister/friend and it’s good that you have found a friend since you and your sister are so not alike. it’s interesting how we can interpret a text so differently depending on our experience. /Kristin.

Brothers and sisters

The following thematic passage illustrates how a discussion about boys’ and girls’ different worlds starts from an extract of a fictional text. Soon the talk leaves the text and the discussion moves over to the readers’ relationships with their own siblings and to gender equality.

The students who have grown up with equal rights for boys and girls realize what advantage they have had when they are being confronted with different conditions where males and females are valued differently. Their comments are evidence of cultural awareness. Also the difference between women’s situations then and now are being discussed.

The boys and the girls live in separate worlds. The boys in their universe and we in ours. My brothers for example. They’ve got plenty to say to me and Nenny inside the house. But outside they can’t be seen talking to girls. Carlos and Kiki are each other’s
The quote relating to the relationship between boys and girls is easy for me to relate to. With a brother who is four years younger than me, my parents could never understand why we were able to get along and play together inside the house (for the most part anyway) and yet at school and outside we led completely separate lives and socially unable or unwilling to talk to one another. In school, the ideal of “what is cool” seemed to take over and we found that it “wasn’t cool” to talk to your older/younger brother or sister /Stephanie.

I would like to speak to the comment that you made about you and your brother being able to get along and play together inside the house but that you didn’t necessarily socialize outside.

Being an only child and living with my mom who was a single parent, I didn’t have much exposure to boys/men as I was growing up and as a result I still don’t feel completely comfortable around men.

Even though you didn’t socialize with your brother, I think it is such a positive that you got along with him as you were growing up. It is excellent experience for girls to spend time with male siblings and fathers who are good role models. I think it is also important that we teach our boys, (sons or male students) to treat women with respect. Some of the students that I teach come from very male dominant cultures and there is a great deal of difference in their approach to male and female teachers. There is real disparity in what they learn at home and the behavior that is expected of them at school /Kristine.

It is very interesting to read what you have written about boys and girls. When I was a child I never thought about things as girlish or boyish. I have a younger brother and we often played together with both boys and girls. I cannot remember that our parents treated us differently. As I grew up I realized that our society is not gender equal, but personally I have never been unfairly treated. Equality in a friendship or love relationship is self-evident to me. I guess that I’ve been lucky /Stina.

I consider very interesting the comment from Stephanie about her relationship with her brother because I had the same experience that Stina had because we were two sisters and two brothers in my house and we shared everything. It was great to be a friend of our brothers’ or my sister’s friends! Besides our parents treated us equally and it was very difficult for
me to see kids in the US who barely speak to their brothers or sisters. I love my brothers and my sister and no matter how far I am from them they are my best friends... yes Stina, I am very lucky too! /Luz.

To be a teacher

The students made frequent connections to the teaching profession, discussing their roles and relationship to students. Let us view a quote:

"Where do you live?" I pointed at the 3rd floor. "There." "You live there? There?" The way she said it made me feel like nothing. I knew then I had to have a house. A real house. One I could point to (Mango Street).

Almost every student had picked and commented upon this short extract. They all speak about how damaging a prejudiced utterance like this could be to a child. They all agree that a tactless or mean comment is never justified. Some of the American students who have grown up in poor conditions bear witness to experiences similar to the main character in Mango Street.

I believe it all made an impact on all of us. It’s so important for us as teachers not to judge any of our students. We will all come across students of all different social classes or status, and it’s important not to have prejudices! /Kristine.

This part makes me realize how damaging words can be. Sometimes it’s not what we say, but how we say them. As a teacher, it makes me focus on making sure I do not lessen the self esteem of my students in any way. I also get from this that we all want to be accepted and be proud of something. It is hurtful when someone else takes this from us /Tina.

I agree that it is very important how you use words among people and perhaps more in the classroom. It is important that the pupils feel comfortable. Just as you say, it is not what you say, but how you say it that matters /Charlotta.

We as teachers need to keep in mind that regardless of where our students live and what living conditions are for them, they must remain focused to learning and giving them the means to not have to feel ashamed or embarrassed by where they live /Frank.
Language and communication

For natural reasons the importance of language ability for the individual (child) engage the students as their majors are first, second and foreign language teaching and learning. This theme was dominating in the discussions of the two texts. For example did the views of Niila’s mother regarding her children’s mother tongue cause much discussion. This is a familiar field to the students and the text engages them from a power perspective.

She felt inferior. She wanted to give her children what she had never had. They would be real Swedes, and hence she wanted to teach them Swedish rather than her native Finnish. But as she knew practically no Swedish, she kept quiet (Vittula).

This poor woman does what she thinks is best for her children, not knowing how important it is to have a good mother-tongue in order to learn a second language. Finnish was also seen as an inferior language by the society and even forbidden to use in some schools, so it’s not strange that she felt like this /Lena.

The text initiates a discussion on oppression, stereotypes and prejudices connected to minority languages. Even if Niemi writes about past times, the students notice that there are still language prejudices left in Sweden and the USA.

Niila's mother felt that it was better for her children to not learn Finnish based on a societal stereotype of inferiority. Unfortunately, this same idea tends to dominate not only the minds of those who speak these “inferior languages” but also in the minds of those who speak a dominant language. The concept of inferiority is unfortunately supported in most daily circumstances, which is why it is important for teachers to recognize the stereotype and encourage their students to overcome them and not fall under the same biased trap /Stephanie.

Finally, an example of lack of verbal communication, which caused a lively discussion, probably as the professional focus of the participants is on language. The discussions were about prejudices about “the silent child," children’s alternative ways of communicating and how teachers’ expectations influence children’s progress. Charlotta’s starting point is a quotation from Vittula and she makes the other participants connect to the same sentence.

The oddest thing of all about Niila was that he never spoke (Vittula).
This can also reflect the prejudice one might have about immigrants. Just because they aren’t able to communicate in for instance Swedish does not mean that they don’t know anything or haven’t got knowledge about various things/ Charlotta.

Charlotta’s entry is commented on by Stephanie who relates to her own experiences. She has realized what it means to ethnic minority students not to be able to participate on the same linguistic conditions as native students and thus not having the same possibilities at school.

Although I had not thought of it, the way you related these circumstances to immigrants is also interesting and quite true /Stephanie.

In this chapter the students show awareness of which knowledge, skills and attitudes that a teacher has to possess to be able to meet her students according to their own conditions. The web discussion shows that the students are conscious of the importance of being able to make use of their own experiences from childhood and those of other, less privileged people to strengthen students’ self-confidence and feeling of being accepted. Their comments display openness and accepting attitudes. Mainly economic and social conditions are highlighted as well as the demands for equality and everybody’s right to adequate education. When respect for and understanding of other cultures and conditions are being discussed the focus is not mainly on ethnicity.

**Students’ reflective pieces of writing**

When the web discussion was over the students wrote their final reflections and handed them in to their instructors. They said that the reading and the discussion had taught them much about another culture and other perspectives. They have become more aware of societal injustice and recalled incidents from their own childhood, knowledge that they saw as valuable for their teaching profession. There are also comments about similar language policy problems of the two countries.

*I learned about Swedish society and I enjoyed reading some comments where the students from Sweden and the USA realized about the privileges and advantages they have in their countries in contrast with the immigrants who unfortunately do not have the same rights even when they work hard to obtain and deserve it.*

*What surprised me a lot was to read the opinions from the Swedish students and to realize that they have the same problem that the USA has where native people are not using their language because of the globalization of English.*
The students note that they are stimulated by the texts. Thanks to the fiction they catch sight of the others and themselves. The personal reflection starts in the reading process and leads on to talks.

I consider that this intercultural activity was successful because we discovered and learned about other cultures while we were actively part of the process giving our opinions about the books and sharing our own stories with the students who participated in the reflection.

We can notice how the students become aware of hidden stereotypes concerning culture and gender as these are expressed in the literature and in the talks with the other participants.

From this intercultural activity, I became more aware of how culture and cultural values is rooted into literature and therefore all forms of communication. When reading The House on Mango Street, I was able to recognize and relate to the embedded cultural and gender stereotypes. I was unaware of the stereotype that people from Finland are not talkative. Through my discussions with Charlotta, I was able to recognize this new connection between culture and stereotypes to literature and communication. Having the opportunity to communicate with the students from Sweden provided me with the chance to learn more about the culture and setting intertwined within the text.

The interaction creates a new awareness of the importance of knowing about the backgrounds of the students.

My personal interaction through an international web based communication environment to students whose backgrounds are very distinct from my own has opened my eyes to new knowledge that will be valuable when working with students in my own classroom. From our discussions, I have recognized the effect that both adults and children have on young children.

The participants realize that there are a great variety of interpretations depending and individual experiences. On childhood incidents

There is a variety of possible interpretations based on individual backgrounds and knowledge of culture. ESL teachers must therefore value the individual interpretations of their students while at the same time interacting with them.

Texten fördjupas av samtalet, och nya tolkningar och perspektiv blir synliga:

The fictional text is made deeper and new ways of looking at it are revealed.

It not only deepened my understanding of both texts, but it also opened my eyes to new perspectives and interpretations.
The students have developed valuable insights for their professional life. They see cultural values in the fictional texts and in the communication with their colleagues about the texts. The interaction with the other participants has made the connection between culture and stereotypes in literature and communication more obvious.

**Concluding discussion**

The Swedish students said during the oral evaluation of the project that their discussions probably would have reached a greater depth if they had had been given more time for reflections. In addition a more thorough knowledge of intercultural theories would have benefitted the web discussions. At the same time a demand for connection to various theories would probably have been too coercive or limiting and the result might have been a less spontaneous discussion. At first I had no intention to use the students’ discussions as empirical data for a study. But having read through the material the idea of an empirical study emerged and I got the students’ permission to use their postings.

**The texts**

The fictional texts have served as a basis for the exchange of thoughts and experiences. They have served as a stepping stone to the transatlantic talk. The interactions could be seen as *literary transfer*\(^4\) (Torell, 2002) i.e. personal connotations to what the texts were about.

The choice of texts might be questioned. The setting of Niemi’s novel is strange even to the Swedish students. They said at the evaluation meeting that a more typical Swedish text might have been more accurate. However the students seem to be quite happy with the selection of texts. Personally I was pleased that they both had a multicultural theme. They were written by authors who are familiar with the conditions of minority children, which was well in line with the course objectives and with our project. The two texts give excellent examples of *blanks (Lehrstellen)* (Iser, 1978), which the reader has to fill in. Cisnero writes a restricted and airy prose and the story is united by isolated sequences or snapshots. Niemi’s fantasies and magic realism also leaves a lot to the reader. Another important aspect is the *re-reading*. There are reasons to believe that in several cases the students were already familiar with the text from their own country. Most likely this fact influenced their reading which does not seem to have been a disadvantage to the study.
The language

The medium of communication was English which may have been of some significance. In the Swedish group one out of five students was a native speaker of English while the others had learnt English as a foreign language. The American group consisted of four students whose mother tongue was English and two with Spanish as their first language. It is difficult to judge to what extent the communication was hindered by the different languages. The Swedish students’ English was very good and it seems the same could be said for the two Spanish speaking students in the American group. However, it cannot be excluded that the medium of English may have been an obstacle. It may have been more difficult to express nuances and emotions in a foreign language, which may have had a negative influence on the dialogue. But no such suggestions were expressed at the evaluation session.

The Swedish text was read in translation implying all the well known problems of changes and distortions. Every translation means additional mediation, from author via translator to reader.

Medium and interaction

The students had no or very few technical problems, partly thanks to generous computer support from each institution from the start. Even though not all entries started a branched discussion, surprisingly many displayed a high degree of dialogical interaction. The students made between 4 and 17 entries, on average 7.5. One participant, Tina, represents the high figure. The number of log-ins averaged 76, a high activity considering that the web-communication lasted for only nine days.

Right from the beginning the discussion was characterised by intimacy, in spite of the students never having met face-to-face. The comments were often quite personal and straightforward. In this respect perhaps the pressure of time was even an advantage. There was no time to politely “sneak around” a subject. A sense of solidarity has presumably emanated from the fact that they had a professional interest in common and almost all being women. The students seemed to be free and open though some of them had doubts about the medium at the beginning. It also positively influenced a community feeling to the American group who had to jump into the web-communication as a flying start to their course. A feeling of respect and belonging quickly appeared and the medium only got appreciative remarks.

I consider the asynchronous dialogue, i.e. the participants did not chat on-line, as a benefit to the quality of the study. The participants had time for reflection about reading and writing. Thus they had the possibility to produce more nuanced and precise
comments. They were also free to take part in the interaction at times that suited each individual.

**The intercultural learning process**

Did the web-mediated interaction about fictional texts promote the students’ intercultural understanding? I would be inclined to answer the question affirmatively. To express it in terms of Byram’s theoretical model the participants have developed knowledge, acquired skills, worked on their attitudes and displayed a detached view of their own culture. They have shown curiosity and openness, learnt something about other cultures in a broad sense, about other perspectives and about themselves. In short, they have displayed understanding for otherness.

Intercultural understanding is an interactive process which begins with an encounter. The encounter which is studied in this article was considered by all the students to be a positive one, as they had got new perspectives on their own culture and those of others. They have taken a step forward. The interpretations of others showed them alternative ways of perception and gave them chances to put new questions to the texts:

*In conclusion, this experience was engaging due to the mere fact that we were communicating with students from Sweden. It was also very helpful to see how someone else interpreted the text because it gave me new perspectives to consider. Many times what someone else had to say, led me to question what I had read even more/Tina.*

In this learning situation many meeting-places were created: between text and reader, between two or several readers and between the individual student and her own reflective text or piece of writing. No meeting has taken place on someone’s premises but between the partners in that third place that Kramsch is taking about, or to use Bhabha’s expression- in the third space. The encounter has been in the space in-between or the empty space outside the borders that everyone has to go beyond to approach the other. In this case also cyberspace could be seen as a third space. The encounter has been made possible thanks to literature which has offered room for personal interpretations.

The cultural encounter between text and reader and between the two groups of readers was not only a meeting between two nations. It was also between young students and more experienced (the age difference between the participants was about 25 years and in the text there were young and old people). The urban and the rural settings were represented by Chicago and the Torne Valley in northern Sweden. Different groups and perspectives met in fiction and in reality through the characters in the books and the
participating students complete in social differences, minority and majority population, male and female. Language policy was compared: The status of Spanish in the USA and Finnish in the north of Sweden. Teacher students met fully formed practicing teachers. The past met the present, the 60’s and our time in discussions about standards and ideals. The differences revealed were not between nationalities but between individuals, which exemplifies the broader meaning of the concept of culture.

I would argue that the students have developed a deeper self-understanding as their own memories and experiences have been brought to the surface and discussed. This fact is verified by their contributions to the web interaction. To be able to share their personal experiences the students had to decentre from their own lives and memories. They have also become aware of their own relationship towards ethnic minority students and students with different linguistic qualifications. The younger Swedish students thought that they had learnt how to relate to their future students at school from their more experienced American co-participants. The open and straight forward communication made them curious of how the others handled the issue. Everyone thought that the interaction was valuable since all had the same professional interest but individually varied.

Conclusion

Returning to the question: Is a web-mediated communication of this kind a feasible way to increase the possibilities for an intercultural learning process? The students’ comments prove that the contribution of the others have helped them to create new meanings and to broaden their understanding of alternative views. “It gave me new ideas how to think”, one student writes. That was exactly the whole purpose of the project. Widened perspectives and the development of new ideas means that the aim has been fulfilled, at least for some of them. This has happened by using other students’ texts as thinking devices and thus collectively creating knowledge. (Dysthe 2002).

What has been reported in this article could be regarded as pilot project. The teaching/learning experiences achieved have made me interested in developing the method further, preferably with teacher students in a completely different learning culture, e.g. from Asia. Thus this example could be regarded as a tentative step towards an intercultural methodology applied to reading fiction to educate future teachers and students in schools into intercultural readers.
References


Notes

1 I am greatly indebted to Dr Miryam Durante-Espinosa, at the time at Penn State University, PA , (now Valdosta State University, Georgia, whose help made this report possible.

2 Matos, 2004, s.169 cites Kramsch: Here we arrive at literature as a door, a passage, a threshold, a borderline at the intersection of different spaces: its one face turned to the outside, the social, the other, the unknown; and its other to home … our subjective personal space of emotions and experiences. The door may be a third place in its own right, growing “[…] in the interstices between the culture the learner grew up with and the new cultures that he or she is being introduced to".

4 The concept literary transfer is discussed in *Hur gör man en litteraturläsare? :om skolans litteraturundervisning i Sverige, Ryssland och Finland*, Ed. Örjan Torell, 2002.

5 A possible objection would be that the “linguistic space”- the English language- did not belong to all on the same conditions. But as pointed out earlier even the non-native students had a very good knowledge of the language.

6 Later I tried a similar project with teacher students from Hong Kong and Sweden which was a complete failure, but gave me a cultural experience. However that will be another article.