

Culture Teaching Methods in Foreign Language Education: Pre-service Teachers' Reported Beliefs and Practices

Abstract

Culture teaching in a foreign language (FL) classroom involves linguistic and cultural knowledge about the target culture as well as pedagogical skills of integrating these into classroom practice. In general, more attention should be paid to culture teaching methods in FL teacher education in order to move from the traditional, teacher-centred approach towards a new dynamic and learner-centred practice. The main focus of this study is on Finnish pre-service FL teachers' reflections and initial experiences in culture teaching during their one-year teacher education programme at a Finnish university. In 2012–2015, the data was collected through three questionnaires (N = 65) and interviews (N = 10) during consecutive one-year teacher education programmes. In the qualitative and quantitative analysis, we focused on trainees' reflections on cultural content, methods, and initial culture teaching experiences. The main stumbling blocks in culture teaching emerging from this study were: the integration of culture into the lessons, the use of the target language, and the use of personal cultural experiences in a pedagogically meaningful way. Based on the results of our study, we suggest that more reflection and work on culture teaching is required to meet the needs of teacher trainees. The results indicate that some development in Finnish pre-service FL teachers' perception on culture could be observed, e.g. they wanted to promote interaction and share their personal cultural experiences with their students. Furthermore, recommendations for teacher educators regarding how to teach culture teaching, and how trainees could learn to integrate it into lessons are given.

Keywords: foreign language teaching and learning; pre-service language teacher cognition; culture teaching; language teacher education

1 Introduction

Foreign language (FL) teachers need to be well-informed about the foreign language and culture. They have to be experts in various fields, a kind of linguistic and cultural all-rounders. In addition, FL teachers play an important role as a “mediator between learners and those who are already members of the language-and-culture group of which they seek understanding” (Byram and Feng 2005, p. 925; see also Damen 1987: Ch. 16). On the basis of my own experiences as a FL teacher and teacher educator in Finland, it is my conviction that not until after teaching their first lessons at the Teacher Training School, Finnish FL teacher trainees seem to recognise how much knowledge and skills actually are required in culture teaching.

Teacher thinking is a relatively young field of study, especially from the perspective of pre-service language teachers (see e.g., Borg 2006; Gatbonton 2008). Previous studies concerning FL teachers’ cognitions during teacher education indicate that pre-service teachers’ own experiences as language learners have a strong influence on their future practices as teachers (Johnson 1994; Borg 2003; Bandura and Sercu 2005) and they may be difficult to change, since they are already established when trainees enter the teacher education programme (see e.g., Pajares 1992). However, beliefs are important when they develop their teaching practices during the teacher education (see e.g., Johnson 1994). Therefore, the pre-existing beliefs and images should be recognised and reflected in teacher education for them not to remain unchanged and inflexible (for a review see e.g., Grossman, Wilson, and Shulman 1989; Kagan 1992; Borg 2006, 52–54). Studies dealing with the initial teaching experiences of pre-service teachers are required in order to find out how the theoretical information on language learning is interpreted and how this is adapted into classroom practices (Johnson 1994). Studies of the impact of teacher education on pre-service FL teachers (for review see Borg 2006, 63) deal

mostly with second language teacher education, especially teaching English as a second language. In order to get a broader picture of the development of FL teachers, studies concerning the development of teachers of other languages than English are needed.

Several studies indicate that FL teachers understand teaching and learning culture and intercultural competence primarily as teacher-centred transmission of the cultural knowledge of the target culture, which they are familiar with (Bandura and Sercu 2005; Ryan 2012). Therefore, it is of utmost importance that reflecting on methods of culture teaching and learning is included in FL teacher education. In research literature, there is some evidence that teacher education has an influence on cultural teaching practices (see e.g., Bandura and Sercu 2005). However, further studies on pre-service teacher thinking and understanding of (inter)cultural teaching and learning are needed (Ryan 2012). Especially, empirical research on the acquisition of intercultural competence is still very limited (Sercu 2004). Against this background, the purpose of this study is to examine Finnish pre-service FL teachers' conceptions about culture teaching and to get an insight into their first experiences in culture teaching in FL classroom. Firstly, previous studies on culture teaching methods and the role of culture teaching in FL teacher education are discussed. Secondly, the collected data is analysed in order to capture initial culture teaching experiences of Finnish pre-service language teachers. Finally, the results of the study are discussed in order to find out how more attention to cultural pedagogy could be paid to in FL teacher education.

2 Theoretical Background

Two areas of research literature are discussed below: a) culture teaching methods of FL teachers and b) the role of culture teaching in FL teacher education.

2a) Culture Teaching Methods of FL Teachers

In FL teaching and learning, the role of culture can be regarded as the “fifth dimension” (Damen 1987). However, FL teachers often seem to define language teaching objects mostly in terms of linguistic competence (see e.g., Castro, Sercu, and Méndez 2004; Galeano and Torres 2014), that is, grammar and vocabulary. In FL classrooms, culture is mostly taught separately and not integrated with other basic skills such as writing and speaking, although it is generally known that some elements of language teaching are more cultural in nature and other more linguistic (cf. Liddicoat and Scarino 2013, Ch. 2). The integration of cultural knowledge into linguistic knowledge in FL classrooms lies mostly on the shoulders of FL teachers. Their task is to create a meaningful context for learning the new language and culture by bringing the target culture to the classroom.

There has been much discussion in the literature about the views of culture and on how the views are closely related to teaching practice and student learning. It is widely recognised that beliefs about the culture or cultural knowledge are significant for shaping teaching practice (cf. Borg 2003; Liddicoat 2004). Liddicoat (2002, 2004) suggests that there are a static and a dynamic approach to culture. He characterises the static view of culture as treatment and transmission of facts that can be separated from language teaching. In contrast, the dynamic view of culture can be regarded as an active and interactive engagement with cultural knowledge. Accordingly, culture learning is not merely information, but also interaction and understanding. A similar theory is presented by Dervin (2011), who distinguishes between “solid” and “liquid” interculturality based on the sociologist Zygmunt Bauman’s paradigms of solidity or liquidity (cf. Bauman 2004). The solid concept is about descriptions of national features of all of the representatives of a certain country by other or themselves. This often leads to stereotyping. The liquid approach refers to interculturality that is created when individuals encounter. Teaching practice and studies in the of FL education are mostly based on the solid or static concept of culture (cf. Dervin 2011). In addition to the solid and liquid view on culture,

Dervin (2010, 2011) found in studies on interculturality a third category of interculturality, the Janusian view. With this he refers to the misconception that on the one hand researchers call for the liquid understanding of culture but on the other hand they categorise, for instance, study participants into national groups. In this way, their approach to culture is still solid.

Several studies indicate that methods of how culture teaching should be practiced in FL classrooms are often missing (see e.g., Sercu 2005; Castro et al. 2004; Garrido and Álvarez 2006). The study of Castro et al. (2004, 102) revealed that European FL teachers would like to devote more time to culture teaching. They felt frustrated, because they could not do this, the stumbling blocks being the lack of time, institutional constraints or perhaps even themselves believing that teaching the language is more important than teaching intercultural competence. A study among Spanish FL teachers indicated that methods in culture teaching do not necessarily reflect constructivist beliefs (Sercu, Méndez, and Castro 2005). The methods do not often include reflection, cultural comparison or how to act in intercultural situations (Sercu et al. 2005). Teachers do not seem to stimulate further discussions, encourage cultural projects or reflect on the textbook content (Costa Afonso 2011). In other words, “the growing importance of reflexivity” in culture teaching, as suggested for instance by Kramsch (2014), is not necessarily internalised by FL teachers. It would be beneficial to integrate learner-centred methods into culture teaching practices. One possible explanation for the dominance of teacher-centred methods and factual approach in culture teaching could be the use of FL textbooks as the major source for cultural topics. Several studies have revealed that in designing their lessons, teachers tend to deal with the cultural topics presented in the textbooks (see e.g., Bandura and Sercu 2005; Sercu et al. 2005; Tomlinson 2012; Liddicoat and Scarino 2013, Ch. 6).

FL teachers who have plenty of cultural knowledge and personal experiences of the target culture, are also able to convey these to their students (see e.g., Kelly, Grenfell, Allan, Kriza,

and McEvoy 2004; Galeano and Torres 2014). For instance, Damen (1987) encourages FL teachers to integrate their ethnographic learning experience into teaching practice. She suggests seven steps for teachers, pre-service or in-service, to plan personal ethnographic projects. Damen provides culture teaching methods that have been used in cultural training. These are, for instance, culture discovery (searching information about the target culture), culture quizzes, culture self-awareness techniques (i.e. sensitivity exercises, self-assessment questionnaires), dialogues (role plays), group discussion, informant interviewing, making the language and culture connection (explaining the connotative aspects of vocabulary), media unit (use of films or other visual devices), problem solving practice, readings (use of background information from articles, newspapers or other written sources), and simulations (Damen 1987, 280–290). If cultural and cross-cultural aspects are included in the syllabus, they can be tested, for instance, through self-assessment by giving opportunities for discussion and reflection with peers or teachers (see e.g., Damen 1987; Byram 2009).

2b) Culture Teaching in FL Teacher Education

In many countries, the linguistic content (e.g. grammar, literature and language history) is often emphasised in FL teacher education (see e.g., Johnson 2009). Garrido and Álvarez (2006) examined the needs of language teachers in relation to the integration into the intercultural dimension. They stated that general language teacher education programmes have until now been unable to support the intercultural development of FL teachers. Already in 2002, a report directed to the European Commission recommended that in language teacher education more attention should be paid to the intercultural and sociocultural pedagogy (see Kelly et al. 2004). There are similarities and differences between second language (SL) teacher education and FL teacher education that should be considered when teacher education programmes are designed. One similarity is that novice teachers need to acquire skills and competencies used by effective teachers and discover methods used by them (Richards 1990). One striking difference which

affects the FL teacher education is the perspective they have to the target language and culture. While in FL teaching and learning the perspective is from the outside in the context of learners' own culture, in SL the target culture is viewed from the inside. The motivation of learners can also vary. FL learners usually learn the new language voluntarily, but SL learners, e.g. immigrants and international students, may be required to take the language course (Sercu 2004). In addition, the classroom as a context for language learning is different in SLA and FL education. SL classrooms are usually surrounded by the target language, but FL classrooms are often geographically far away from the learners' own country (Block 2003, Ch. 2). This has influence on culture teaching. In addition, FL teachers outside the target culture are often non-native speakers who share the same language and cultural background as their learners. SL teachers are generally native speakers of the language being taught who sometimes do not speak the learners' L1 and/or share the same cultural background (Sercu 2004; see also Braine 2010).

There is not much research literature on how FL pre-service teachers apply the theoretical knowledge acquired at the university to real classroom situations. In studies that compare novice and expert teachers' expertise, the uncertainty experienced by pre-service and novice teachers emerges. According to Tsui (2003, 79–80), the focus of experienced ESL teachers had changed from self to students. Similarly, the findings by Gatbonton (2008) showed that both novice and experienced L2 teachers were attentive to students' behaviour in the classroom. One difference was that novice teachers focused more on students' negative than positive reactions. This reveals the uncertainty they have about themselves as teachers. Numrich (1996) analysed diaries kept by 26 novice teachers during a practicum. The study designated that novice teachers focused on students' reactions. In addition, the results of the study indicate that the integration of culture succeeded especially by those novice teachers who had had positive learning experiences in studying culture.

As far as we know, (pre-service) language teachers' perception of culture teaching has not been studied in the Finnish context. Accordingly, it is difficult to say, how the view on culture has evolved. Dervin and Dirba (2006) conducted a small-scale study on Finnish (N = 9 pre-service teachers of French) and Latvian student teachers' (N = 9 pre-service teachers of English) perceptions of intercultural competence at the beginning of their training. They concluded that no clear signs of liquid understanding of culture were found in this qualitative study. Harjanne, Larenas and Tella (2017) studied Chilean and Finnish in-service FL teachers' perceptions of teaching and study realities in their classrooms. The results of their questionnaire survey conducted in 2010 showed that Finnish in-service language teachers use a lot of the mother tongue instead of the target language in their teaching and that they rely on textbooks to a great extent. However, another result of the survey was that teachers generally acknowledged the value of integration of language and culture. The results of the study by Harjanne et al. (2017) point out that there is a discrepancy between teacher-centred practices and the willingness to integrate cultural aspects. This makes Finnish FL classrooms and (pre-service) teachers an interesting case. The top ranking of Finland in the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) is often explained through the Finnish research-based teacher education in which practical training in teacher training schools is included (see Sahlberg 2010). In addition, the strong independence of teachers' work is frequently mentioned as one of the success factors (see Simola, Kauko, Varjo, Kalalahti, Sahlström 2017). The important role of teacher training schools and the use of mentoring teachers in the Finnish teacher education is also one rationale for the present study. Further factors why Finnish language teacher education is an interesting case are presented in Section 3.1.

3 Research Project: Culture Teaching Methods experienced by FL Pre-service Teachers

3.1 General Remarks

In the Finnish context, FL students apply for the pedagogical studies at the Department of Teacher Education usually after receiving their bachelor's degree in their major subject at the university subject department. In this way, a distinction is made in the Finnish subject teacher education between subject matter knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge (cf. Shulman 198; Johnson 2009). In most cases, Finnish language students have one language as a major and one or more languages as minor subjects. After completing the master's degree and the pedagogical subject teacher studies at the Department of Teacher Education, they are qualified to teach languages at all school levels from basic to adult education. During the one-year teacher education programme at the Department of Teacher Education and Teacher Training School associated with the Faculty of Education, the pedagogical skills are learned.

At the Department of Teacher Education, there usually are special teacher educators for each subject (e.g. foreign languages, science, and history). The one-year pre-service teacher education is mostly integrated into the Master's programme, but can also be completed after receiving the Master's degree. When Finnish pre-service language teachers enter the teacher education programme, it is expected that they have gained the necessary content knowledge about the target language and culture at the university subject department. The fact is, however, that Finnish pre-service language teachers have differing subject matter backgrounds when they come to the teacher education programme (cf. Grossman et al. 1989). At the Department of Teacher Education, they are mainly taught theoretical pedagogical knowledge to enable them to transform the content into a learnable form. At the same time, the practical knowledge which teachers need in their classroom practice (cf. Shulman 1987; Burns and Richards 2009; Pachler, Evans, Redondo, and Fisher 2014, Ch. 2), is acquired in Teacher Training Schools. Hence, Finnish pre-service teachers should be able to apply to a classroom setting both their academic knowledge acquired in university courses and the pedagogical content knowledge acquired at the Department of Teacher Education (cf. Mehlmauer-Larcher 2012). The mentoring teachers

in Teacher Training Schools are mostly experienced teachers. They are responsible for the supervision of the training lessons conducted by trainees and provide scaffolding and models of successful teaching for them. In the context of this study, the amount of lessons held by trainees at the Teacher Training School varied from 15 to 30. In the context of the university in the focus of this study, trainees practice in multicultural classrooms which can help to develop their intercultural competence (cf. Kelly et al. 2004, p. 34).

Although European language teachers are expected to teach for intercultural understanding, they do not necessarily get explicit training in dealing with social and cultural aspects and linguistic and cultural diversity (Kelly et al. 2004). This holds true also for the Finnish FL teacher education. In Finland, the specific content and organisation of the subject teacher education programmes vary from one university to another. Sometimes the content of pedagogical studies can differ even from a teacher educator to another in the same university. During the pedagogical studies at the Department of Teacher Education, cultural aspects in FL teaching and learning are often integrated into other themes. Considering the main objectives of the Finnish subject teacher education programme, for instance, giving skills to act as an autonomous, responsible and ethical teacher, supervisor and actor in society, one academic year can be regarded as a very short period in the professional development of a teacher (see e.g., Virta 2002).

In this study, we concentrate on the one-year teacher education programme in a Finnish university. Accordingly, practices described below refer only to that particular university.

3.2 Research Questions

When teaching and learning are studied, we are dealing with mental processes which are very difficult to observe and to measure (Borg 2006, Ch. 6; Pajares 1992). Borg (2006) uses the term teacher cognition “as an inclusive term to embrace the complexity of teachers’ mental lives”

(p. 50). When teacher cognition is studied, we need to ‘take a look’ inside the heads of teachers, as when studying any other forms of learning. The aim of this study is, above all, to reveal the knowledge and beliefs of Finnish pre-service FL teachers about culture teaching and to explore their initial culture teaching experiences during the teacher education programme. The specific research questions are the following:

1. How do pre-service language teachers define culture teaching methods? How should culture, in their opinion, be taught?
2. What are pre-service language teachers’ initial experiences of culture teaching during the one-year teacher education programme?

3.3 Data Collection and Participants

In this study, the data was collected through questionnaires and interviews during a one-year teacher education programme at a Finnish university. In the questionnaires, prospective language teachers were asked how they understand ‘cultural content’ in FL teaching and which teaching methods promote acquisition of cultural competence in FL lessons. The questionnaire form was chosen to collect data, although this method can have many disadvantages, especially when it is used to examine respondents’ beliefs. In the questionnaires of our study, it could be seen that some answers were superficial and did not allow in-depth exploration (cf. Borg 2006, Ch. 6). This is why an interview was chosen to complement the data. The data collection was mostly in the Finnish language, because it was important that participants fully understand the questions and could answer in detail. We noticed that participants who answered in their mother tongue (Q1–Q2) were more profound and detailed than those who answered in English (Q3). In the Q3, respondents were advised in the instruction that they could also answer in Finnish although the questions were in English.

Table 1. Participant profiles (Q 1–3 and interviews).

Participants	Age	Gender	Major subjects of the participants	Previous experience as a FL teacher
Piloting questionnaire 1 April 2012 (N = 19)	22–39	16 Female 3 Male	German 4, Spanish 2, English 7, Russian 4, Italian 1, Swedish 1	yes 11 no 8
Questionnaire 2 October 2013 (N = 22)	22–38	20 Female, 2 Male	German 9, French 7, Spanish 7	yes 9, no 13
Questionnaire 3 October 2014 (N = 24)	23–57	22 female 2 male	English 8, German 7, Spanish 4, Swedish 2, French 1, Russian	yes 14, no 10
Interviews May 2015 (N = 10)	23–30	9 female 1 male	German 5, Russian 1, Spanish 3, Italian 1	yes 1, no 9

The questionnaires were filled in by altogether 65 pre-service language teachers between the years of 2012 and 2014. The piloting Q1 was conducted at the end of the one-year teacher education programme in 2012. The following Q2–Q3 were completed during the first half of the programme (in 2013 and 2014) before the topic of culture teaching had been dealt with at the university course. Participants' previous experiences in teaching were very limited, mostly consisting of short periods as a substitute teacher. Only 7 respondents were male, while 58 were female. Their ages ranged from 22 to 57 years at the time of data collection. The small number of male students in the study reflects the small proportion of them among language teacher trainees. Because it was possible to identify the male students, the gender of the students is omitted in quoting the responses. This holds also for the age of students, because only few of

them were older than 40. Only in the Q1 one respondent had another nationality than Finnish. In conducting the survey, 22 of the respondents filled in a paper copy (Q2) and 43 answered through a web-based questionnaire (Q1 and Q3). In the Q2 and Q3, the researcher was present as a teacher educator and was well known to the participants. The piloting questionnaire (Q1) was completed before the researcher and teacher educator started working at this particular institute of teacher education. The piloting Q1 was more detailed and included more multiple-choice variants (similar questionnaire study was conducted by Sercu, Bandura, Castro, Davcheva, Laskaridou, Lundgren, Garcia and Phyllis 2005) in order to find the relevant questions for the following questionnaires (see Appendix 1).

The data from the questionnaires was complemented through interviewing ten pre-service FL teachers (Students 1–10, from now on ST1–10). In the interviews, we tried to capture the development in trainees' cognitions during the one-year teacher education programme. The interviews lasted on average 30–35 minutes and were conducted face to face in Finnish at the end of the programme in 2015. The interviews focused on different views and practices in relation of FL teaching and learning, e.g. content knowledge of FL teachers and impact of teacher education on the language teaching and learning. In addition, trainees were asked to describe in their own words the relevance of culture teaching and reflect on their own practices and experiences in culture teaching during the teacher education programme.

3.4 Analysis of the Data

When analysing the questionnaires, written responses to open-ended questions were the source of the most insightful data in our study (cf. Borg 2006, 169). The keywords used by the respondents were assigned to different categories, which were elaborated by using examples and explanations the respondents provided (cf. Borg 2013, 35). The qualitative analysis of the open questions was conducted in the original language of the respondents (excerpts original in

Finnish are designated with OF). The selected quotations in Finnish language were translated into English.

In the role of the teacher educator, the researcher was well known to the interviewees. The interviews were transcribed and analysed qualitatively in the original language. As a result of the qualitative content analysis, a set of topics was generated. As usual in qualitative research, we did not aim to generalise the findings (cf. Burns 1999, Ch. 2), but we report and reflect on the experiences of the trainees. The data from interviews play a supporting and complementary role in elaborating the data from the questionnaires. In this way, the quantitative and qualitative components of the study are treated together (cf. Bryman 2007).

By using several sources, we have tried to overcome the weaknesses in a single data collection method (cf. Bailey 2006, Ch. 6) and increase the reliability and validity of the research (cf. Burns 1999, Ch. 2). One limitation of this study is its subjective nature, since the researcher has a double role as a researcher and teacher educator of most of the respondents. In addition, the collection of data was done in the middle of a busy teaching period. But after collecting and analysing the data, it crystallised out that the study reveals information that is important not only for the becoming FL teachers but also for the professional development of teacher educators.

4 Research Findings

In general, culture teaching was regarded very important by Finnish FL pre-service teachers. In the questionnaires, many respondents emphasised that culture is the context for FL teaching and learning. In the Q3, four students said that culture was “everything but grammar”. Altogether 39 of all 65 respondents mentioned daily life and routines in daily communication as important objectives in culture teaching. Language as a tool for communication in daily life situations was mentioned especially by prospective Spanish teachers, since they felt that there

are huge cultural differences between Europe and Latin America. They often stressed the significance of cultural comparison, in order to avoid cultural misunderstandings or saying something that is not appropriate. This indicates that they had the preconception of the existence of others, that is, underlying ideas of national cultures seemed to play a certain role in the background (cf. Phillips 2007; Dervin 2011). In the minds of trainees culture seems to be divided into “foreign” and “home” cultures. How the trainees talk about the cultures shows explicitly features of the so-called “culturespeak” (Hannerz 1999), which emerges through mentioning the differences between cultures. The fixed cultural categories point to the static/solid understanding of culture (Liddicoat 2002, 2004; Dervin 2011).

In the interviews, most pre-service FL teachers stated that they recognised the importance of culture teaching during the teacher education programme. Some of them felt that culture teaching had been neglected when they were at school. The willingness reported by trainees to change their prior school experiences indicates that teacher education has an impact on their cognitions (cf. Borg 2003). They want in their future profession convey as much culture as possible as the following excerpt from an interview shows:

[---] so before this year I did not even think about culture teaching. When I think about my own experiences in the school, I would say that we did have too little culture teaching. [---] Now I feel that it brings a nice extra to the teaching and also variation. Usually students [at the teacher training school] think it is really fun. If you can integrate some culture into your teaching, it can be motivating for the students and it can even raise discussions. [---] (ST8, German, OF)

The interviewees were asked if their knowledge of the target language and culture was sufficient in relation to the FL teacher profession. It emerged in the interviews that generally, trainees were more satisfied with the linguistic than cultural knowledge acquired at the subject

department. They often brought up that cultural knowledge was placed too early in their studies and there were not enough courses. Five interviewees wished more in-depth cultural knowledge during their studies at the subject departments. In the interviews, trainees mentioned that especially their spoken language skills in everyday situations were insufficient. This had caused uncertainty during the lessons. In the interviews, six interviewees said that they had been themselves responsible for the development of the linguistic knowledge, especially when daily life is concerned. In general, they seemed to need more colloquial language competence integrated in their studies at the subject department. It has also been noted in the research literature that language teachers mostly need to be responsible for their personal professional development themselves (see e.g., Bailey 2009). It seems that the trainees' need for daily life language competence derived from the practice observed and/or experienced in the Teacher Training School. In the communicative language teaching (CLT), which is the common practice in Finnish language classrooms, students are encouraged to use the target language through communicative oral tasks and peer scaffolding (see Harjanne et al. 2017). However, the CLT often reduces the communication to the use of colloquial language, especially at the beginners' level. The continued intercultural exploration, which is, searching for the culture in language through questioning and further reflections, would allow going beyond the solid understanding of culture (cf. Dervin 2011). Not only language in the daily life, but something to express and interpret cultural aspects is needed (cf. Liddicoat & Scarino 2013, Ch X, p. 15)

In the questionnaires, the prospective FL teachers were asked to consider which teaching methods in their opinion promote acquisition of cultural competence in FL lessons. Table 2 summarises the culture teaching methods mentioned by trainees.

Table 2. Culture teaching methods mentioned by pre-service FL teachers (Q1–Q3).

Method	Pre-service teachers who mentioned the method (Q1, N = 19)		Pre-service teachers who mentioned the method (Q2, N = 22)		Pre-service teachers who mentioned the method (Q3, N = 24)	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Use of the target language in classroom communication/ Practice of communication routines	4	21.05	13	59.09	7	29.17
Visitors in the classroom	6	31.54	9	40.90	7	29.17
Teacher tells about his/her personal cultural experiences	9	47.36	11	50.00	11	45.83
Teacher gives information about the target culture	4	47.36	6	27.27	4	16.67
Use of media	16	84.21	14	63.64	19	79.17
Cultural projects (e.g. searching information), presentation by learners	9	47.36	6	27.27	6	25.00
Discussions/comparisons by learners	4	21.05	2	9.09	-	-
Reading literature	5	26.31	3	13.63	4	16.67
Tasting food	4	21.05	2	9.09	3	12.50
Use of authentic texts and pictures	3	15.78	-	-	6	25.00
Games and quizzes	2	10.53	-	-	-	-

Simulations of real life situations in the target culture	2	10.53	5	22.72	1	4.17
School visits abroad and exchanges	2	10.53	1	4.55	3	12.50
School visits in the own culture	2	10.53	1	4.55	-	-
Letter exchange with peers in the target culture/social media	1	5.27	2	9.09	1	4.17
Use of the textbook as a source of information	1	5.27	2	9.09	1	4.17
Cultural objectives in the classroom	1	5.27	5	22.72	3	12.50

In the list of culture teaching methods, “teacher tell/gives” or “use of media” were the most mentioned ways of conveying culture in the FL classroom. This shows that student teachers construct the culture in a rather teacher-centred manner. Although trainees would in their thinking be moving towards the dynamic/liquid teaching practice, their approach seems invariably static/solid (cf. Liddicoat 2002, 2004; Dervin 2011).

In both the questionnaires and the interviews the aspects of integration, the use of target language (by both teachers, students and visitors), the use of media and teaching materials and the relevance of cultural experiences were crystallised as the most significant ways to teach culture in FL classrooms. These aspects are discussed in turn below.

The integrative approach in FL teaching and learning. In both the questionnaires and the interviews, it could clearly be seen that language and culture are considered important and inseparable by trainees, as the following excerpts from the interviews illustrate:

I think it is important that these two [language and culture] go hand in hand.

Otherwise the language is separated from the context and becomes an abstract thing that has no real-life relevance. (ST6, German, OF)

[---] But I think you can always find time and you can always integrate it [culture] to other issues. [---] In my opinion, many teachers see it [culture teaching] as exclusive but I really should not be in that way. (ST5, German, OF)

ST4 (German) felt in the interview that "sometimes we have had culture infos and such things, but it [culture teaching] has been separated from the other content of the lesson" and that "integration could happen more often." ST1 (German) felt that it would be nice "if culture could be integrated and not dealt with only when it is in the textbook or like this that first we do grammar and after that culture". In the interviews, it came out that the integration of culture should be practiced more during the lessons at the Teacher Training School. Some interviewees mentioned that they had practiced culture teaching "very little during this year" or "nothing at all", and "actually just at the end of the programme we taught some cultural topics at the senior secondary school". One interviewee said that "at one phase I tried to do it [culture teaching] and I started one lessons with a cultural topic, only five minutes, but otherwise I did not teach it, I should do it more often". The trainees often were insecure how to integrate culture teaching into their lessons as the following excerpt from an interview shows:

I noticed that it [culture teaching] has to be prepared. I admit that at the beginning it was very difficult because we planned the lesson very mechanically. But anyway, we had some lessons where we had a cultural part. In the future, it would be very important to integrate it [culture] to the whole teaching. (ST 9, Spanish, OF)

Some trainees felt that they had had successful experiences in integrating culture and some had even searched for methods how it could happen naturally. It seemed to be difficult to find the

right timing and set up the framework for culture teaching. Trainees generally had recognised the link between language and culture and showed willingness to integrate them. This indicates that they are hovering between the static/solid and the dynamic/liquid view of culture (cf. Liddicoat 2004; Dervin 2011) but are not yet able to put the dynamic/liquid approach systematically into practice. The mixing of these approaches can be interpreted as the so-called Janusian view (Dervin 2010, 2011). A further tendency discerned was that student teachers had recognised that the teacher is responsible for the exact amount of culture teaching during the lessons and also how it is learned.

The use of the target language in classroom. The use of the target language as a language for communication can cause uncertainty and misunderstanding in the classroom interaction (see e.g., Breen 1985). The language proficiency of language teachers has a direct influence on the lesson. For instance, teachers with lower proficiency level may avoid communication with students in the target language (see e.g., Braine 2010). In this study, Finnish trainees found the use of the target language as an efficient method to convey culture. For instance, one pre-service Swedish teacher mentioned the use of “typical phrases of the culture (e.g. ‘not my cup of tea’, ‘fika’ [to drink coffee in Swedish])” as an example of culture teaching methods. Trainees seemed to recognise the culture in language and showed willingness to create possibilities for learners to live the “experience of communicating” through the use of the target language (cf. Liddicoat & Scarino 2013, Ch. 5). Trainees felt that teachers’ role is significant as a role model in using the target language (cf. Kramersch 2009; Liddicoat & Scarino 2013, Ch. 5), as the following excerpts from the questionnaires illustrate:

[---] It is important that the teacher sort of takes a role when teaching the foreign language. S/he speaks in the target language and uses also the body language typical for the target culture.” (Student teacher of Spanish, Q2, OF)

The teacher should use the foreign language as much as possible and include also in

his or hers classroom gestures and ways of speaking typical of the target culture. [---

] (Student teacher of French, Q2, OF)

[---] In the classroom the target language should be used as it is used in the target

culture (for example to address formally with 'Sie', polite ways of speaking).[---]

(Student teacher of German, Q2, OF)

The use of textbook and media as teaching materials. The FL textbook is often the main source of content and methods in culture teaching (see e.g., Bandura and Sercu 2005; Sercu 2005). Accordingly, one of the challenges in FL teacher education is how to learn to use the cultural content in FL teaching materials in a pedagogically meaningful way (see e.g., McGrath 2013, Ch. 4). In the questionnaires, student teachers only seldom (4/65) named the use of textbook as a culture teaching method, but frequently (49/65) the use of other media, that is, mostly films on YouTube.

The role of textbooks in culture teaching was not much reflected in the questionnaires but in the interviews it was evident. For instance, ST1 (German) reflected on her initial culture teaching experience with learners of German at the age of 10. She told how she had managed to shed more light on the cultural background of the textbook figures. ST1 had used a film about the Austrian empress Sisi in order to explain the name of the dog Franz Joseph in the textbook. She had also had a visitor from Germany in the classroom, who had told about his school in Germany. In this context, ST1 also mentioned that the cultural topics (living in Germany, school) treated in the lesson were all chosen from the textbook. As the experiences of ST1 demonstrate, textbook topics may become “more exciting when pupils are offered opportunities to discover similarities and differences between their own lives and everyday life in German-speaking countries.” (Andon and Wingate 2013, 195). This could happen by creating a cultural framework for the textbook figures. Generally, it can be concluded that it was difficult for

student teachers to find ways how to link subjective cultural knowledge and experiences to the cultural information in the textbook.

The relevance of personal cultural experiences. It seems that experienced FL teachers accept the subjective nature of cultural knowledge more easily than novice teachers (cf. Kramsch 2009). In the questionnaires, student teachers often brought up that it is important to integrate one's own cultural experiences into teaching. In addition, they considered it valuable that students are given an opportunity to share their own experiences with their peers. For FL teachers, it is important to possess own cultural experiences which can be only acquired by spending periods of residence in the countries where the language is spoken (Kelly et al. 2004, 34–35). Trainees often referred to this in the questionnaires:

I have noticed the difference in teachers who have spent time in the target culture.

They can tell better about the culture and everything regarding the country and the language. (Student teacher of English, Q1, OF)

The teacher can tell about his/hers personal cultural experiences in the target culture. [...] The teacher can invite visitors from the target culture (if s/he knows somebody) and organise different projects (like Comenius). (Student teacher of German, Q2, OF)

The discussions and reflections on cultural experiences with students were found to be important by trainees:

We watched a video about a carnival and then had a discussion with the pupils.

Many of them had been in places where carnivals are held. There had been some carnivals in their own countries as well. So the students told about their experiences and we then compared their experiences with the German carnival culture. (ST8, German, OF)

So I have been trying, well, I have lived twice in Germany and I have a lot of personal experiences from there. I have tried to tell about my experiences at least in small things. In one lesson at the senior high school we talked about studying in Germany and in that way we dealt with living and studying. (ST6, German, OF)

Trainees had also tried to create authentic situations in the classroom. This emerged in the interviews, in which role-plays in daily life situations in the target culture were often brought up, as the following excerpt from an interview shows:

ST8: Well, I have taught football culture in Germany and then we had these Christmas traditions. It was in the senior high school, these Christmas markets. We held a real Christmas market in the classroom. [...] Then we had something about carnival and Easter. [...] (ST8, German, OF)

In the interviews, it was often mentioned that pre-service teachers felt very important that students were interested in their experiences. They were sensitive to the students' responses to their culture teaching (cf. Gatbonton 2008). Some interviewees stated that during their lessons they were not prepared for students' reactions as the following excerpt from an interview illustrates:

ST10: So, I think that [culture teaching] is very important in every way. It is also important for the students to know that in culture there are a lot of different aspects. I tried, for instance, although it is a kind of crazy thing, but I wanted to test it, because I like it myself. I like this poem because it is parodic. [...] I tried to hold a small presentation and show a film from YouTube. [...] I think it was funny and my supervisor also liked it, but the students did not like it at all. This was a surprise for me. [...] Students perhaps think topical issues are more important. [...]

Researcher: So you think it should be topical?

ST10: Yes, if it is that what students think is interesting.

Researcher: Yes, this was your own experiment... You really think that nobody was interested?

ST10: Yes, the interest ended immediately when I started to talk about history. But when I show my own photos and tell them [students] where I have been, it seems to be more exciting although the history would be qualitatively better. But the topicality is the thing. [---] (ST10, Spanish, OF)

In the interviews, pre-service teachers often reflected that the questions regarding cultural topics seemed to come 'out of the blue'. This had caused uncertainty for them during the lesson. In addition, the way how personal cultural experiences should be integrated into the lessons bothered pre-service language teachers: Which experiences can I integrate? Are they relevant enough? Are they real? This uncertainty came out in the interviews, as the following excerpt from an interview illustrates:

ST7: So it [culture teaching] is stressed all the time and I think it is important. But I guess when you still are a trainee and you stay only a limited time with a group. I felt that it was very difficult to tell about my own cultural experiences. Although the pupils certainly understand that these are my personal experiences, but I still felt that I am teaching and my experience is not enough when pupils reflect. Although when I observed the teaching of my supervisor, it seemed that the cultural experiences are naturally integrated into his/hers teaching. It looked like culture really is integrated and not just an isolated part at the end of the lesson. [---] I felt like students are expecting that I have a lot of information in many various fields of foreign culture. But my target culture is such a country that is different from village to village. [---] But I certainly could have said to them [students] that this is my personal experience. [---] I think that I don't dare to share my own experiences if

they do not have a context somewhere. [---] I don't have enough self-confidence to present myself as all-knowing although I know that I don't have to be like that, but anyway. (ST7, Italian, OF)

The trainee's comment shows that she finds it difficult to apply her personal cultural experiences to real classroom situations. She seems to focus on what students think about her experiences or whether they are of value for the students (cf. Numrich 1996; Gatbonton 2008). She had also noticed that in culture teaching, attention has to be paid to several aspects simultaneously, namely, cultural varieties and emotions, not just the knowledge about the target culture (cf. Kramersch 2009).

Discussion: Outcomes and Implications for Language Teacher Education

When reflecting on their beliefs and experiences in culture teaching, pre-service language teachers noticed many issues that they should be paying attention to in the future. On the basis of the questionnaires and interviews analysed in this study, these issues were, above all, use of target language and teaching materials in the classroom, and integration of personal cultural experiences into lessons. On the one hand, teacher candidates brought up content and methods, which were familiar to them from their experiences in school (teacher tells/shows/brings up). On the other hand, they mentioned both knowledge that had been acquired during their university studies before they entered the teacher education programme (literature, linguistic knowledge), and such objectives and methods which they had found meaningful during the teacher education programme (communication in the target culture in daily life situations).

From the results of the study, it can be concluded that, Finnish pre-service language teachers are in general not aware of how much knowledge culture teaching involves in order to find the perfect timing and methods for cultural issues. On the basis of this study, it can be discerned that trainees have internalised the meaning of subjectivity (Kramersch 2009) and personal

engagement in culture teaching. When reflecting on their initial teaching experiences, they often focused on emotional aspects of language learning (cf. Kramsch 2009; 2014). Although trainees recognised the importance of personal experience in culture teaching, this seemed to raise feelings of uncertainty, especially the amount of personal cultural experiences and the ways these can be integrated into lessons. The facts-oriented perspective in language teaching seemed to help them to reflect on their own cultural experiences (cf. Byram and Feng 2005). Our study confirms the earlier conclusion by Garrido and Álvarez (2006, pp. 174) that pre-service FL teachers should be “encouraged to pay attention to daily cultural interactions so that they can develop their own conceptual understanding of what cultural knowledge really is”. Ideally, this should happen even before entering the teacher education programme.

The data indicated that teacher trainees’ understanding of culture is quite restricted. It reflects mostly a “solid” (Dervin 2011) or “static” (Liddicoat 2002, 2004) view of culture. However, there were signs that Finnish trainees moved from solid/static to liquid/dynamic view on culture. Compared to the results in earlier studies (Dervin and Dirba 2006), Finnish trainees in this study could provide many personal experiences to explain their thoughts. This indicates that trainees seem to value the importance of sharing personal experiences in culture teaching. Trainees often mentioned the significance of interaction, understanding, and discussions in culture learning, which illustrated the trend towards the dynamic view of culture, being at this moment a mixture of static and dynamic approach. However, results of this study showed that trainees are focusing on national cultures (cf. Dervin 2011), which implies that the stronger consideration on questions of cultural understanding is needed in FL teacher education. This could happen by paying attention to how teachers can develop more dynamic/liquid thinking about culture(s) in general, for instance, by interactive questioning (Liddicoat & Scarino 2013, Ch. 5).

Although there has been a lot of discussion in the Finnish context about the goals in the new core curriculum that emphasises among other things language awareness and intercultural learning (Finnish National Board of Education 2014), no students mentioned general educational goals in the connection to culture learning (similar results were obtained by Dervin and Dirba 2006).

The results of the study also indicate that it is beneficial for culture teaching that teacher candidates have a good knowledge of language used in daily life (cf. Lantolf 2009). In the interviews, trainees often explained how their students responded to their culture teaching. This implies that they regard culture teaching as a dialogic process (cf. Damen 1987; Byram and Feng 2005). The results of this study also designate clearly that trainees pay very much attention to the reactions of their students (similar results observed by Gatbonton 2008). Our results show that teacher trainees should practice how to build a cultural framework for the texts and activities in the textbooks. Novice teachers do not necessarily know, which textbook activities are well designed and suitable for their group of learners (cf. Tsui 2003, 213). Sercu (2013) suggests that during the teacher education programme it would be beneficial for pre-service language teachers to implement different language teaching theories in practice, by conducting small-scale action research. After implementation they should be given a chance to reflect on their experiences.

Based on the results of this study, some implications for language teacher education are proposed (summarised in Table 3).

Table 3. Recommendations for language teacher training based on the results of the study.

Results of the study	Recommended practices for FL teacher educators
Use of target language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Co-operation with institutions giving linguistic and cultural knowledge - Pay attention to the language and cultural skills needed in teacher profession

	<p>already before entering the teacher training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Train pre-service teachers to use target language during the lessons (cf. Harjanne, Larenas, and Tella 2017) - Reflect and share good and bad experiences, so that trainees can be prepared to face uncertainty better.
Integration of culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Give trainees practical examples of how to integrate culture (for example, teacher educators can think aloud how they would handle certain situations themselves) - Give trainees advice on how to incorporate culture into their lesson plans - Train how to integrate teachers' ethnographic learning experience with teaching practice (cf. Damen 1987) - Give trainees a chance to reflect on theories and their own practices (cf. Sercu 2013) - Let trainees document their points of view at the beginning and at the end of teacher education - Raise awareness of discovery learning (use as teacher educator or mentor yourself approaches that encourage students to research and present their findings) - Raise awareness of learner-centred culture teaching methods in order to analyse and understand new cultures (cf. Galeano and Torres 2014)
Use of teaching materials and other media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Help trainees to analyse FL textbooks (for example conduct a small-scale analysis of teaching materials and then reflect on it with peers) (McGrath 2013, 207–208) - Let trainees justify their selection of texts and exercises from the textbook - Help trainees to reflect on the cultural content of the textbook (Costa Afonso 2011; Damen 1987) - Train how to build a cultural framework for texts and activities in teaching materials - Train how to link teachers' cultural knowledge and subjective experiences to

	the cultural information in the textbook - Let trainees design own cultural activities
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For all the recommended practices, peer observations and whole group feedback could be added. There should also be room for personal comments (Sercu 2013). In teacher education, teacher educators should use the think-aloud method in order to make good practices visible. It is a fact that reflective methods are not enough (Akbari 2007) and the role of action and practice should not be underestimated. Culture teaching can only be learned through trial and error.

Conclusion

In this article, we have conducted a study concerning Finnish pre-service language teachers' knowledge and beliefs about culture teaching methods and explored their culture teaching experiences during the one-year teacher education programme. The importance of the topic was justified through research literature on the role of culture teaching in FL education and teacher education. The data was collected with questionnaires filled in by 65 Finnish pre-service language teachers and interviews of ten prospective language teachers during the one-year teacher education programme at a Finnish university. On the basis of our results, there is evidence to suggest that good knowledge of language and culture gives self-confidence. By reflecting and sharing experiences, pre-service teachers can be prepared to face uncertainty in culture teaching. The study revealed some development in pre-service teachers' perception on culture. Some indications (interaction, personal experiences) towards liquid or dynamic approach to culture were identified. Our study revealed that three areas related to teaching culture should to be paid attention to in FL teacher training: the use of target language (especially in daily life), the use of teaching materials and the relevance of own cultural experiences. Above all, ways of integrating culture into lessons should be addressed.

Teacher education should be an important source for new ideas. The main concern should be the question of how we can help teacher trainees to learn how to teach languages. For instance, in the Finnish context, language teaching methods like language awareness, discovery approach and action-based learning are in the focus of the new core curriculum 2016 (Finnish National Board of Education 2014). Accordingly, these new ideas should be promoted in the FL teacher education. Based on the results of the study, we have provided some recommendations on how to deal with cultural issues in FL teacher education, but we are not able to give an overall valid recipe (see Table 3).

Regarding language teacher training, there is need for more studies which increase understanding of how language teachers learn and develop. Especially, studies that deal with teaching other foreign languages than English are required. This study designates that more reflective approach focusing both on the teachers' thinking and on their behaviour are beneficial in teacher education. This implies that teacher training methods which enhance both theoretical and action-based reflection should be designed and developed further.

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Appendix 1: Questionnaires 1–3

Questionnaire 1 (Original in Finnish)

1. Basic information (Age; Nationality; Mother tongue, Experience in foreign language teaching; Which languages do you study at the university?; Which foreign languages would you like to teach in the future?; Which countries have you visited in which the language is spoken?; Describe your visits to the countries in which the language is spoken.)
2. In your opinion, does a foreign language teacher have to maintain the knowledge of the target culture(s) by visiting the country/countries in question? Please specify if needed. (Options: Yes, definitively; Yes, to a certain limit; Not necessarily; Not at all; I don't know.)
3. How do you get information about the foreign culture(s) associated with the foreign language(s) you want to teach in the future? (Choose as many options as necessary.)
4. Do Finnish foreign language teachers have enough opportunities to maintain their contacts with the target county/countries? Please specify if needed. (Options: Yes, definitively; Yes, to a certain limit; Not necessarily; Not at all; I don't know.)
5. How often do you read literature that is related to language and culture teaching and learning? (Options: Every week; Every month; More seldom; Never) Please specify.
6. About which topics would you like to learn more? Please mark the most important with a '1', the next with a '2' etc. (Oral communication; Written communication; Grammar; Everyday life in the target culture; Society in the target culture; Literature; Language learning methods; Culture teaching methods; Another topic)
7. Which objectives of culture teaching do you consider to be important in foreign language teaching? Please give examples.
8. How do you understand 'cultural content' in foreign language teaching?
9. How have you conveyed cultural content in a foreign language classroom? Please give examples.
10. How can a foreign language teacher convey cultural content in a foreign language classroom? Please give examples.
11. How can culture learning be evaluated? Please specify.

Questionnaire 2 (Original in Finnish)

1. Basic information (Age; Nationality; Mother tongue, Experience in foreign language teaching; Which languages do you study at the university?; Which foreign languages would you like to teach in the future?; Which countries have you visited in which the language is spoken?; Describe your visits to the countries in which the language is spoken.)

Open questions:

2. How do you get information about the foreign culture(s) associated with the foreign language(s) you want to teach in the future?
3. How do you understand 'cultural content' in foreign language teaching?
4. Which objectives of culture teaching do you consider to be important in foreign language teaching? Please give examples.
5. How can a foreign language teacher convey cultural content in a foreign language classroom? Please give examples.

Questionnaire 3 (Original in English)

1. Basic information (Age; Nationality; Mother tongue, Experience in foreign language teaching; Which languages do you study at the university?; Which foreign languages would you like to teach in the future?; Which countries have you visited in which the language is spoken?; Describe your visits to the countries in which the language is spoken.)

Open questions:

2. How do you get information about the foreign culture(s) associated with the foreign language(s) you want to teach in the future?
3. How do you understand 'cultural content' in foreign language teaching?
4. Which objectives of culture teaching do you consider to be important in foreign language teaching? Please give examples.
5. How can a foreign language teacher convey cultural content in a foreign language classroom? Please give examples.