

# Chapter 4

## Introducing the Two-Year Study



### 4.1 Introduction

The previous two chapters have provided important overviews of the intercultural dimension by way of laying a foundation and rationale for the study we report in this book. In Chap. 2, we focused on key aspects of the international literature on the intercultural dimension, both in education more broadly, and in the teaching and learning of additional languages (L2) in particular. We also presented the findings of a range of studies into the intercultural in educational contexts. In that chapter, we continued the discourse we had begun in the opening chapter that essentially problematises the notion of intercultural competence. In the face of a construct that is hard to pin down, we explored the challenges that teachers face. We concluded that a recurring theme of the international literature and prior studies is just how difficult it seems to be, especially at the level of programmes in schools, to integrate an intercultural dimension into L2 programmes.

In Chap. 3, our focus turned to the New Zealand context. We looked in particular at how L2 teaching and learning is currently framed in this context, and went on to discuss a number of studies into the intercultural that have taken place in New Zealand. We concluded the chapter with several of the key issues raised by Conway and Richards (2018). They suggested, first, that professional learning and development (PLD) would provide a useful (indeed, crucial) means of moving teachers' practices forward. However, this PLD needed to incorporate solid introductions to, and discussion of, how the intercultural is to be understood in the context of L2 learning, alongside the importance of reflection and strategies that might help L2 learners to reflect on and develop their own intercultural perspectives. Second, classroom-based experiential learning was seen as an important catalyst for facilitating comparison, contrast and evaluation of cultural similarities and differences. Third, Conway and Richards perceived a need for researchers to work alongside teachers in co-constructive studies that might help take both theory and practice further.

Thus, Chap. 3 (alongside Chap. 1) has examined the New Zealand educational context and the place of *Learning Languages* in the *New Zealand Curriculum* (NZC) (Ministry of Education, 2007) that set the stage for our own study to take place. The purpose of this chapter is to outline the methodological underpinnings and the research procedures of the project. The first part of the chapter addresses the approaches and methodologies relevant to the research questions we posed, followed by a discussion of our chosen data collection methods and a consideration of related ethical issues. The next part of the chapter provides a full description of the participants and the research procedures.

## 4.2 Background

The two-year study we report in the remainder of this book builds on the recommendations proposed by Conway and Richards (2018). In particular, we sought to find out how New Zealand primary/intermediate school teachers teaching languages could be supported to help their learners to develop their intercultural competence in the context of learning an L2. We explained in Chap. 1 that, at the outset, we made the decision to frame this competence in terms of *intercultural capability*. The *Merriam-Webster Thesaurus*, for example, defines *competence* as “the physical or mental power to do something,” and *capability* as “a skill, an ability, or knowledge that makes a person able to do a particular job.”<sup>1</sup> Although this thesaurus also suggests that *capability* can be regarded as a synonym of *competence*, and presents the *competence* definition as a secondary definition for *capability*, our perspective was that *capability* was the more apposite word in the context. Additionally, we considered that learners would develop several capabilities. That is, we were interested in exploring the extent to which, through L2 learning, learners could develop *skills, abilities and knowledge* that might inform successful intercultural interactions (as opposed to more generally developing the *physical or mental power* to undertake such interactions).

Furthermore, and in line both with the published expectations of the NZC and the recommendations of Conway and Richards (2018), we were interested in exploring the extent to which learner-centred and experiential classroom experiences, as operationalised through specific inquiries, would facilitate the development of intercultural capability. As we noted in Chap. 1, at the outset of the project we posed the following overarching research question: can a teaching as inquiry process in the context of learning an L2 enhance intermediate school learners’<sup>2</sup> intercultural capability?

As we explain in more detail later, this was a four-phase project over two years whose essential components were as follows:

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.merriam-webster.com/thesaurus>.

<sup>2</sup> That is, learners in school years 7 and 8 (11+ to 12+ years of age).

Phase I (Year 1 first half): collect baseline data.

Phase II (Year 1 second half): co-construct the first of two inquiry cycles.

Phase III (Year 2 first half): co-construct the second of two inquiry cycles.

Phase IV (Year 2 second half): consolidate and write up the findings.

In terms of the aspects of the study we report in this and the following chapters, we look back at the whole project from the perspective of its various stakeholders (students, teachers and ourselves as researchers/teacher educators), and address the following two questions:

1. How do stakeholders' understandings about enhancing language learners' intercultural capability change and develop over time?
2. What are the implications for language education going forward?

### 4.3 Research Framework

This research was situated within an interpretivist research paradigm (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and utilised a qualitative, multiple case-study approach (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Yin, 2014). Interpretivism was chosen for this study as it is a perspective that helps us to explain human and social reality. As Crotty (1998) argued, an interpretivist approach “looks for culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social life-world” (p. 67). In the context of this study, the social reality we sought to explain was that of the non-specialist primary/intermediate language teacher attempting to enhance the intercultural capabilities of learners through the study of an L2.

The interpretive worldview allows for a combination of data types alongside the multiple realities of the various participants and the interpretations of the researchers (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Since this study focused on five teachers and their students' learning in four schools (i.e., multiple realities and various participants), a qualitative approach was applicable. It was appropriate to frame the study as multiple case studies, as each of the five teachers and their students represented individual cases. This approach aligns with Stake's (2006) contention that the complex meanings of a wider phenomenon are better understood when the particular activities and contexts of each case are considered. More broadly, the qualitative case-study approach supported our investigation of “a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context” (Yin, 2014, p. 18).

#### 4.3.1 *Inquiry-Based Approaches*

The impetus for the project documented in this book was our interest in better understanding the complexities of implementing the intercultural dimension in L2 programmes in intermediate schools in New Zealand, where, as we noted in Chap. 1,

teachers are often non-specialists in the language they teach and may also be learning the language alongside their own students (Scott & Butler, 2007). This focus was deliberate for several reasons.

First, earlier studies in New Zealand have indicated that, even in contexts where teachers may have received prior teacher education and may be regarded as “specialists” in the language they teach, the intercultural dimension remains substantially under-developed (Kennedy, 2016; Oranje, 2016; Ramírez, 2018). Second, the NZC has placed a specific requirement on schools to be planning for the implementation of L2 programmes in Years 7–10, which includes the two primary/intermediate years (7 and 8). Schools with students in these years must at the very least be thinking about how they will address L2 learning. Third, and as we made clear in Chap. 3, the delivery of L2 programmes in New Zealand is informed by two different and largely mutually exclusive literature review reports (Ellis, 2005; Newton et al., 2010), with the second of these (which focuses on the intercultural dimension) being published subsequent to the release of the NZC and subject to less extensive dissemination. These three intersecting issues make the New Zealand primary/intermediate context a particularly interesting one for an investigation into the intercultural in L2 programmes.

We approached our investigation as the co-construction of new understandings and the development of “theories that are grounded in the problems and perspectives of educational practice” (Carr & Kemmis, 1986, p. 122). Therefore, the five teacher participants contributed their knowledge of practice and the five research partners (the authors) supported the teachers in evidence-based research through what we labelled as “inquiry cycles” (see Chap. 1).

The study involved working at three different levels of inquiry: *inquiry learning* as a disposition that the school students engaged in (as operationalised in the ways we document in Chap. 5); the *teaching as inquiry* cycles that the teachers designed as part of the project (see Chaps. 5 and 6); and the *collaborative inquiry* established between the researchers and the teachers (see Chap. 7). We made a deliberate decision of positioning the participants in the project as reflective partners and in reciprocal relationships, drawing on the Māori concept of *ako* (reciprocal shared learning) whereby the researchers and teachers were teaching and learning from each other, and the teachers took responsibility not only for the learning of students but also for their own learning while working with and alongside each other. Thus, teaching and learning cycles were anticipated across the intersections between the different partners.

### 4.3.2 *Inquiry Learning*

As introduced in Chap. 1, and in line with the learner-centred and experiential philosophy of the NZC, the reflective approach of inquiry learning focuses on the learners. The students’ engagement in the intercultural inquiries their teachers facilitated for them enabled their learning through curiosity and discovery throughout the project.

As such, engagement with interculturality aligned well with the inquiry learning approach which encourages students to:

- ask thought-provoking questions
- investigate widely and deeply
- make sense of information to build new knowledge
- develop a solution or formulate opinions
- present or share their new understanding with others
- have a valuable learning experience that leads to taking some form of action
- reflect on what they learned and how they learned it (National Library of New Zealand, n.d., para. 4).

### 4.3.3 *Teaching as Inquiry*

At the core of the project, the second level of inquiry focused on the teachers as they planned, and then reflected on the effectiveness of, the teaching and learning interventions they facilitated in the classrooms during Phases II and III of the project (including, as appropriate, their students' learning inquiries). One way of helping teachers, whether novice or experienced, to evaluate the implications of innovation in their practices is to support them in engaging in a process of reflection. The project therefore drew on the teaching as inquiry model in which the teachers utilised "the skills of reflective practice to improve their own situations" (Ferguson, 2012, p. 6). As we pointed out in Chap. 1, this is essentially an action research model which facilitates "a process for enhancing reflective practice and professional growth and development" (Burns, 1999, p. 24), typically addressing educational issues that are practical and have theoretical interest to practitioners.

The teaching as inquiry model presented in the NZC represents an important means of developing teachers' skills in reflective practice, encouraged on the basis that "effective pedagogy requires that teachers inquire into the impact of their teaching on their students" (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 35). The model was originally developed in the New Zealand context by Aitken and Sinnema (2008), and its aim is to address the fundamental question: what teaching approaches enhance outcomes for diverse learners? The model is designed to generate evidence of classroom learning "underpinned by a set of attitudes towards teaching and learning" (p. 54). Open-mindedness is seen as a core component, and represents "a willingness to consider teaching approaches that may be unfamiliar or that may challenge one's beliefs about the best ways to teach," alongside openness to "what the evidence shows about the effects of teaching on student learning" (p. 54).

Aitken and Sinnema (2008) also recognised fallibility and persistence as crucial elements of the model. Fallibility takes into account that learning outcomes are context-specific, and that different groups of students may respond differently to a particular pedagogical approach or intervention. With that in mind, persistence represents the willingness of teachers to continue to inquire into their own practices as part of an ongoing cycle.

**Table 4.1** The teaching as inquiry model

Inquiry component	Inquiry requirement	Link to action research
Focusing inquiry	Establishes student learning goals in a specific area and leads to teacher decisions about what is important for the students with regard to their learning at the stage they have currently reached	Identify and contextualise the issue from the perspectives of theory and past research
Teaching inquiry	Draws on evidence from other contexts (e.g., theoretical frameworks; examples of effective practice) to design and carry out a teaching and learning cycle	Investigate the issue
Learning inquiry	Looks at the outcomes for learners, and considers next steps for future learning	Draw conclusions from findings

The cycle of inquiry proposed by the NZC has three components, as illustrated in Table 4.1.

Each of the components of the model reflects important elements of effective action research, and the cyclical process of “focusing—teaching—learning” can be carried out again at a later time and/or with a different group of learners.

For the purposes of our study, the development of intercultural capabilities was designated as the *focusing inquiry*. The research team supported the participant teachers to facilitate, co-construct and undertake context-specific, theory- and research-informed teaching as inquiry cycles in their selected L2 classroom. At the end of each cycle, the teachers and researchers examined the outcomes for learners as part of the *learning inquiry*. The teaching as inquiry cycles were used to encourage three components of reflective practice as articulated by East (2014):

1. reflection-*in*-action, that is, reflection *during* lesson delivery which may lead to immediate changes to practice;
2. reflection-*on*-action, that is, reflection *after* lesson delivery which may lead to subsequent practice modifications (Schön, 1983, 1987);
3. reflection-*for*-action (Killion & Todnem, 1991), that is, the opportunity for *future-focused* reflection, both before a teaching cycle has begun and after the cycle has been completed (p. 263).

#### 4.3.4 Collaborative Inquiry

The third level of inquiry present in our project is *collaborative inquiry*, where the researchers established a partnership with the participant teachers (as detailed in Chap. 7). Collaborative inquiry (Butler & Schnellert, 2012) draws on conceptions of inquiry and collaboration offered across the literatures on collaborative

action research (Burns, 1999), teacher practitioner research (Baumfield et al., 2012; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009), and exploratory practice (Allwright & Hanks, 2009), most of which trace their origins to action research (see recent reviews by Burns, 2019; Manfra, 2019). As Loughran (2010) argued, linking collaboration and inquiry is “crucial to shaping ways in which changes in practice might not only be initiated, but also sustained” (p. 403). Collaboration is considered an effective approach in meeting educational goals as resources are pooled together and participants share their knowledge and expertise in their contexts of practice (Muijs et al., 2014). Establishing a shared purpose and developing mutual understanding and collegiality are considered central to this process (Loughran, 2010).

In New Zealand, collaborative inquiry is encouraged for groups of teachers working together, often with other members of a professional learning community (TKI, n.d.). In our project, the collaborative inquiry was initiated by the research team who anticipated limitations on the part of the teachers regarding their prior knowledge of intercultural language teaching and learning. We did not see our role as one in which we would direct and tell the teachers what to do; rather, our role was to clarify and suggest without imposing any preconceived conceptualisation onto the teachers about what their intercultural explorations should look like. We were keen to see what could be achieved interculturally as the teachers in our project inquired into their own practices. In turn, we hoped that what we would find out would be useful for other primary/intermediate school teachers for whom the intercultural may be an unknown concept, and would provide some guidance about how other teachers might enhance their own practices.

## 4.4 Data Collection Methods

The study used a number of research methods to capture the three levels of inquiry described above. Quality assurance measures were implemented throughout the project to help ensure consistency across the research team for each data source. This included establishing protocols for the data collection methods, and joint construction of indicative schedules for individual and focus group interviews.

### 4.4.1 *Student Data*

Giving voice to the students’ perspectives was considered to be an essential part of this project, particularly since much of the research on intercultural language education has prioritised adult voices (those of teachers and researchers), and, further, because teachers can be predisposed to observe only what they have expected to perceive in their classrooms (Cook-Sather, 2008). In the New Zealand context,

Bolstad et al. (2013) have stressed the need to address this imbalance by providing opportunities for students to give expression to their experiences and insights.

In order to capture evidence of learners' intercultural outcomes, we held focus group interviews with small groups of students from the participant teachers' L2 classrooms. These interviews, which took place towards the end of the inquiry cycles in Phases II and III of the project, aimed to capture the students' perspectives on the intervention that was the focus of their teacher's inquiry, and—more broadly—their perceptions of language learning, and of gains in motivation, language proficiency and the development of intercultural capability. We chose to use focus groups for this purpose because they can be less stressful than individual interviews, and had potential to provide additional depth in the data due to the possibilities for interaction and reaction between the students (Bagnoli & Clark, 2010). Each of the focus group discussions was audio-recorded and transcribed.

## 4.4.2 *Teacher Data*

We used five methods to collect data from the teachers: questionnaires, interviews, observations, reflective journals and guided reflective exercises.

### 4.4.2.1 Questionnaires

Each teacher completed a questionnaire at the beginning of the project. This was designed to gather demographic information and background data related to the participants' level of proficiency in the TL and level of teaching experience, as well as contextual information about their current teaching position and involvement in the *Learning Languages* programme in their school.

### 4.4.2.2 Interviews

We conducted three types of interview with the teachers, each of which was framed as a semi-structured professional conversation, thus allowing discussion threads to develop and lead to follow-up questions. As with the student focus groups, these were all audio-recorded and transcribed. The teachers were invited to review transcripts of their interviews at a number of points during the project.

1. The initial interviews, conducted at the outset of the project during Phase I, had an overarching focus on the teachers' understandings of effective language teaching and learning and their own practices. Interview schedules contained broad areas for discussion to ensure we were collecting comparable data with all teachers while allowing flexibility in the conversations with each teacher. At this juncture, we also sought to gauge participants' current knowledge and



- understanding of the ten Ellis principles (Ellis, 2005) and the six Newton et al. principles (Newton et al., 2010).
2. After each observed lesson, we held debriefing conversations with the teachers to provide an opportunity for immediate reflection on what had transpired in each lesson. In the teacher interviews in Phases II and III we also guided the teachers in their planning for their upcoming teaching.
  3. At the end of each phase of the study, we also conducted summative interviews with each teacher. The Phase I summative interview captured initial insights into the teachers' language teaching practices and goals. In Phases II and III, the final interviews guided broader reflection on the effectiveness of the inquiries the teachers had undertaken and any themes that arose out of the data from lesson observations.

#### **4.4.2.3 Observations**

An important component of not only supporting the teachers in their inquiries but also of gathering complementary evidence of intercultural learning gains through inquiry was to see the teachers in their classrooms, observe their language teaching and try to capture the unique contextual realities of their teaching. The observers were non-participants in the events of the lessons being observed. We audio-recorded the lessons to capture the specific language and cultural events, took field notes to provide background to transcriptions of the recordings, and occasionally took photos to document the context and the learning activities.

#### **4.4.2.4 Reflective Journals**

We encouraged the teachers to keep a continuing record of their own reflections on the inquiries in folders we set up for them in Google Drive, where they could additionally archive material relevant to their inquiries. The reflective journals also presented the opportunity for asynchronous dialogue with the research team, and contributed to our aim of promoting a culture of ongoing reflection and sharing among the project's participants.

#### **4.4.2.5 Guided Reflective Exercises**

The teachers engaged in guided reflective exercises at different stages of the project. These aimed to provide additional avenues for the teachers to reflect on specific aspects as the project proceeded. The reflective exercises included: responses to relevant readings, preparing brief presentations to the entire group (teacher partners and researchers) with individual updates on the project and how it was unfolding, completing a survival memo (Brookfield, 1995) and writing a vignette with their story of the project which would contribute to a published resource for other teachers.

### **4.4.3 *Researcher Data***

The collaborative inquiry led by the researchers was documented extensively in different ways. Our careful documentation of the two-year project was not initially planned as a data source. However, as part of the reflective processes of the researchers, the organised archives that we had set up proved to be valuable. These diverse data sources included project documents such as the milestone reports we were required to send to the funders on a quarterly basis; audio recordings and transcriptions of meetings of the research team and meetings with the researchers and teachers; email archives and notes from discussions involving different members of the group; and the data from our work with the teacher partners.

## **4.5 Ethical Considerations**

Collecting data from the participants in this project required two key ethical considerations. First of all, it is acknowledged that special ethics attention is required for any research conducted in schools and with school-aged children, and additionally when teachers are working with their own students. With this in mind, we were particularly attentive to the need for fully informed voluntary consent, clear understandings regarding rights to not participate in or to withdraw from the study, permissions pertaining to classroom observations and the potential power differential between teachers and students. In addition to getting informed written consent from the school principals and teacher participants, we ensured that the students were clearly informed of the purposes of the study and its procedures, with age-appropriate supporting documentation and opportunities for questions, prior to inviting them to participate and gaining written assent. Written consent was also obtained from the participating students' caregivers.

Secondly, since the participating teachers in this study were also researcher-partners, establishing relationships of trust was crucial for the co-construction of the inquiries and the open discussion of all aspects of the project. We were mindful that although we had positioned the teachers as partners, there was a further possibility of power imbalances. Hence, all efforts were made to communicate to the teachers with transparency and consider their voices when making decisions.

## **4.6 Teacher Participants**

As previously stated, our team of five researchers worked in partnership with five teachers from four New Zealand schools with intermediate-level students (Years 7 and 8). Each of the schools was urban, being located in or near a major New Zealand city. The student participants were between 11 and 13 years old. The classes had

between 20 and 32 students, almost all of whom were beginners in the language they were learning.

We used convenience sampling initially to select the schools, based on relationships that we already had either with the teachers or with the schools (e.g., through contact when we mentored students undertaking professional practicum placements or through prior research connections), the schools' proximity for the research partners, and geographic and demographic diversity. The teacher partners were then selected with input from the consenting school principals. The number of teacher participants was fixed at five to enable a range of perspectives to be obtained within the parameters of the close teacher-researcher partnerships which characterise this study. However, a professional inevitability of the intermediate school sector can be the transitory nature whereby teachers, for a variety of reasons, move on to new positions in new schools. Some of the initially recruited teachers were unavailable by the time the project began. The final project as reported here included the five teachers we introduce below—Lillian (Chinese heritage); Kelly, Kathryn and Mike (New Zealand European); and Tamara (New Zealand-born, of Māori-Samoan ancestry).

The five teachers were representative of most generalist teachers in Year 7 and Year 8 classes in New Zealand, in that many teachers at this level have minimal fluency in the language they teach and limited experience of the associated cultures. Further, language teaching pedagogy was not part of their initial teacher education programmes. However, subsequent to their initial training, most of the teacher partners had undertaken some type of professional learning for language teaching,<sup>3</sup> and they all embarked on this project with a strong interest in ongoing development of their language teaching practices.

### 4.6.1 *Lillian*

Lillian was an L1 speaker of Mandarin and taught Mandarin in an intermediate school that delivered the International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme, underpinned by the NZC, to students from 34 different nationalities. In keeping with the International Baccalaureate emphasis on internationalisation and developing intercultural understanding, languages had an important place in the school's curriculum. Each student was required to select from one of five languages offered and to continue studying the same language with three 20-min lessons a week through both Years 7 and 8.

Lillian learnt English after moving from Taiwan to New Zealand as a child, while continuing to speak Mandarin at home. She also learnt Japanese at secondary school, and went on to major in Japanese at university. Lillian did not undertake any teacher education specifically focused on language teaching and had not undertaken any professional development in language pedagogy prior to this project. She had

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<sup>3</sup> This included, for example, the Teacher Professional Development Languages (TPDL) programme (see Chap. 3).

taught Mandarin at a private school in New Zealand before moving to her current intermediate school where she was the lead teacher for languages.

During the project, Lillian had approximately 20 students in her Mandarin classes—a Year 7 class in the first year (Phase II) and a Year 8 class (the same students as in Phase II) in the second year (Phase III). Approximately half of the students were from a range of Asian backgrounds, and the remainder were predominantly from New Zealand European backgrounds. The students had already encountered aspects of Asian culture and had been in contact with L1 speakers of Mandarin, both in the classroom and within the wider school community. Lillian’s first two 20-min language classes each week were co-taught with a Mandarin Language Assistant who was assigned to the school each year. These lessons had a specific language focus. As Lillian progressed with the project she elected to use the third lesson each week by capitalising on the school being a “Bring Your Own Device” and a “Google-School,” to facilitate student inquiries with an intercultural focus.

#### **4.6.2 Kelly**

Kelly was an L1 speaker of English, who taught Mandarin as part of her mainstream classroom programme. Kelly had learnt French at school, but did not enjoy it. Instead, she began a self-study mission to learn Mandarin. Language teaching pedagogy was not part of Kelly’s initial teacher education programme, but since beginning teaching she had undertaken professional learning and development (PLD) in this area, including the year-long Teacher Professional Development Languages (TPDL) programme alongside her teaching (see Chap. 3). She had also experienced life in China as part of a three-week immersion scholarship, and continued to learn Mandarin through evening classes. Kelly rated her ability in Mandarin as at intermediate level.

In the course of this project, Kelly taught in two very different full primary schools (Years 1–8). In the first school (in Phase II of the project), the majority of the students spoke more than one language. Approximately 12% were Māori and 81% were of Pasifika heritage. The school did not have a structured approach for teaching additional languages; rather, the approach was driven by individual teachers’ own interest and ability. Kelly taught a combined Year 7/8 class of 28 students, teaching all areas of the NZC. This included a 45-min Mandarin lesson each week. Some of Kelly’s students knew some Mandarin already, from having had her as their teacher the previous year.

In Kelly’s school in the second year of the project (Phase III) the students were mostly from New Zealand European and Asian backgrounds. As part of the school’s additional language policy, every Year 5 to Year 8 classroom teacher was expected to teach Mandarin for 30 min per week. The teachers were offered professional development opportunities for teaching and learning Mandarin, and were supported by a Mandarin Language Assistant. Kelly taught her Year 7 class Mandarin for at

least 30 min weekly, and aimed to integrate Mandarin into some of her classroom routines.

### **4.6.3 Kathryn**

Kathryn taught at an intermediate school that had a tradition of teaching a range of languages. This practice was further consolidated when the school recently gained accreditation to deliver the NZC through the International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme. All the teachers at Kathryn's school were expected to teach te reo Māori at a basic level. Those with some proficiency in an international language also taught that language as part of an arrangement where students rotated through 30-min slots of languages, physical education and ICT once every six days. In so much as there were no predetermined outcomes for the different L2 programmes, and no planned articulation between Year 7 and Year 8, these language courses functioned as "tasters" for the students prior to high school.

Kathryn was an L1 speaker of English. She had been teaching in the intermediate sector for 18 years, and began teaching Japanese six years ago at the request of her principal. At that time, she had not undertaken any teacher education specifically focused on language teaching, but she had subsequently had in-school support from a locally based language adviser. She studied Japanese at high school and university, but rated her L2 proficiency as low-intermediate and acknowledged feeling somewhat insecure about her cultural knowledge, as well as her L2 ability because she had "not used the language for over 25 years." At the time of the project, Kathryn taught Japanese to a large mixed Year 7/8 "team," which was divided into four separate classes with approximately 32 students in each. Kathryn had 30 min with each class every six teaching days.

### **4.6.4 Mike**

Mike was an L1 speaker of English, and a teacher of French. As with Kathryn, he rated his French proficiency as low-intermediate. At the beginning of the project, Mike had 15 years' experience as a primary school teacher, with ten of those teaching Year 7 and Year 8 classes at a state intermediate school. Mike's school was traditional in its organisation, with each teacher working in their own classroom with 25–30 students. All the teachers were expected to teach a language other than English as part of their mainstream programme, but beyond that expectation, they had complete autonomy regarding which language(s) they taught and how. As such, the L2 programmes were based on the teachers' own interest and expertise (with accommodation in the form of a visiting language teacher for classes where the teacher had no knowledge at all of an additional language). This resulted in wide variability in the languages taught and the approaches used.

After disliking language learning when he studied French briefly at high school, Mike recalled in his initial interview that he “had little skill, experience, or enthusiasm” for teaching French when he started. However, he developed an interest in languages education when it became a learning area in its own right in the NZC in 2007 (see Chap. 3). After taking advantage of a range of professional learning opportunities to expand his pedagogical knowledge for teaching languages (including completing the TPDL programme and a Master’s degree in Computer Assisted Language Learning), Mike considered French at the time of the project to be “a major focus and strength” of his classroom programme. Despite this and sporadic ongoing language learning, Mike reported that he still lacked confidence in speaking French.

Mike credited prior professional learning with having heightened his awareness of the interconnectedness between language and culture, but reported being nervous about introducing a cultural element into his language teaching, due to concerns regarding time being taken away from learning the language itself, combined with reservations about his own knowledge of French culture which was mostly second-hand. At the beginning of the project, Mike described his approach to language teaching as “pretty eclectic,” with a goal of maintaining a good balance between traditional and communicative approaches during the one hour he spent most weeks teaching his class French.

#### 4.6.5 Tamara

Tamara<sup>4</sup> taught at the same intermediate school as Mike, where she was in her third year of teaching. She was an L1 speaker of English. Tamara identified strongly with *te reo me ōna tikanga Māori* (Māori language and its cultural practices) from her father’s heritage, although her skills in *te reo Māori* were developed primarily through cultural activities at her school, and then much later through part-time study with an indigenous tertiary education provider. Rating her proficiency in *te reo Māori* as low-intermediate, Tamara was aware of the challenges of teaching a language and culture that she was still learning herself. However, despite not being an expert, she was enthusiastic about integrating Māori across all the learning areas in her Year 8 class programme. Tamara stressed that a key for her in becoming a partner in the project had been to acknowledge her own limitations and seek expertise beyond the school so she could continue developing both her own and her students’ knowledge of *te ao Māori* (the Māori world view).

In addition to Māori, Tamara also knew some basic French (from high school), Samoan (her mother’s heritage), and New Zealand Sign Language, and used smatterings of all these languages as she taught. At the time of the study, she was also

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<sup>4</sup> Tamara took part in just one inquiry cycle (Phase II of the project) because she moved to a different school at the time of the second inquiry cycle.

learning Korean alongside her students during a 40-min class each week with an L1 speaker, and she used this L2 at times in her own class. Having very limited exposure to language teaching pedagogy when she undertook her teacher education, Tamara's approach to integrating languages across the curriculum was based on her own beliefs, rather than any particular language teaching theory. With regard to enhancing intercultural appreciation, Tamara was mindful of the diversity in her students' backgrounds and ethnicities and saw these as a valuable and valued resource.

## 4.7 Researchers

The research team consisted of five experienced language teacher educators with various cultural and linguistic backgrounds—the five authors: Martin (UK); Constanza (Colombian); Jocelyn (New Zealand European); Christine (German); and Adèle (New Zealand European). At the time of the project, each member of the research team was directly involved with school-level language teaching and learning, and each of us therefore brought to the project experience and close familiarity with the New Zealand context for L2 teaching and learning. This included direct involvement with pre-service language teacher education (Martin, Constanza and Jocelyn), in-service language teacher education and professional learning and development (Christine and Jocelyn), and oversight for *Learning Languages* programmes in the Correspondence School, New Zealand's major provider of online and distance learning, alongside prior work in language teacher education (Adèle). We considered that this balance of expertise, with particular strength in teacher education, provided a robust and suitably qualified team to lead and facilitate the project.

Martin, as Principal Investigator, had overall responsibility for the project, but the team worked collegially at all points. Both Martin and Constanza had experience with addressing the Newton et al. (2010) principles directly in their work among pre-service secondary school teachers of languages, and Constanza and Christine additionally contributed this knowledge to the TPDL programme for teachers of languages. Christine's work at that time in a Ministry of Education funded programme to support language learning and teaching in New Zealand—International Languages Exchanges and Pathways—involved direct exploration of the Newton et al. principles with teachers. The Newton et al. principles were also components of the theoretical underpinnings Jocelyn covered in courses on additional languages education with pre-service primary school (and, therefore, generalist) teachers. Adèle brought her teacher education and doctoral research experiences to the team—the former gave particular support to the hui, and the latter (Scott, 2014), with its focus on the role of teachers of languages at the primary/intermediate level of schooling, evidenced considerable research-informed insight into the particular needs of teachers operating at this level in New Zealand.

## 4.8 Research Procedures

As noted at the start of this chapter, the project was conducted in four phases over a two-year period (2016–2017). Prior to that, in the second school term of 2015, we had conducted a pilot study with one composite (Years 4–8) class (see Howard et al., 2015). The piloting had allowed us to evaluate (and subsequently make small adjustments to) the proposed methods and logistics, including ethics processes, the initial teacher questionnaire, interview schedules, observation procedures and focus group protocols.

In planning for the pilot study and collaborating on a funding application for the larger project, we established a strong community of practice as a group of five researchers as we developed shared goals and established roles within the team. As we advanced the design and timeline for the project, we met with the school principals and the teachers in the second half of 2015 to discuss the study, complete the initial consent processes, and plan for Phase I of the project at the beginning of the 2016 school year. Within this larger collaborative inquiry team, we established five teacher-researcher pairs: Lillian and Martin, Kelly and Christine, Katherine and Constanza, Mike and Jocelyn, and Tamara and Jocelyn.<sup>5</sup> Adèle was not directly involved in data collection in schools, but contributed to other aspects of the project, such as guiding aspects of teachers' reflections (see Chap. 7).

Throughout the project, funding was provided to each of the schools so that the participating teachers could be released from some of their teaching. This was to provide time to attend meetings, take part in post-observation interviews and undertake background reading, planning and written reflections.

In what follows, we describe the organisational and procedural aspects of each of the four phases of the study.

### 4.8.1 Phase I (February 2016–June 2016)

The aims for Phase I were: (a) to establish rapport and develop the relationship of the research pairs; (b) to collect baseline data about the schools, their approach to teaching languages, and the teachers' background, including their knowledge about language teaching pedagogies, such as ICLT (see Chap. 3) and the teaching as inquiry process; and (c) to observe the teachers' current language teaching practices. As we noted earlier, in particular, we wanted to find out what the teacher partners already knew and understood about the two key sets of principles (Ellis, 2005; Newton et al., 2010), and the opportunities (if any) that the teachers were already creating for intercultural exploration. After completing the background questionnaire, each teacher met with their research partner for an initial 30–60 min interview, followed by

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<sup>5</sup> Since Mike and Tamara were located in the same school, it made sense for the two teachers to work with one researcher.



two (or more) separate classroom observations and subsequent 20–40 min debriefing conversations. A final summative interview enabled the teachers to further *reflect-on-action* in relation to their teaching during Phase I.

### **4.8.2 Phase II (July 2016–December 2016)**

Phase II began with a two-day workshop meeting of all the participants (five teachers and five researchers). We referred to this meeting as a *hui*, using a Māori word that has been adopted into mainstream use in New Zealand to denote any kind of assembly or congregation or meeting for purposes of discussion.

An important aim of the first hui was for all members of the research team to share their experiences from Phase I, and review the emerging findings. The data at that point indicated that, in line with the recommendations of Ellis (2005), all of the teachers viewed language teaching and learning primarily from a communicative perspective. With regard to developing intercultural capability, the teachers were not aware of the Newton et al. (2010) principles or the intercultural expectations embedded in the curriculum, and an intercultural focus was not evident in their practice (Howard et al., 2016). In line with the background we presented in Chap. 3, this finding was not unanticipated, and the intercultural dimension became a specific focus for the remainder of the two days.

We held workshops to introduce the teachers to the six Newton et al. (2010) principles and to facilitate understandings of the distinction between cultural knowledge and an intercultural dimension in language teaching. This included background reading to introduce the teacher participants to the key messages of the Newton et al. report. It also included short presentations by two people who had undertaken prior research into the intercultural in New Zealand—Kennedy and Ramírez—who shared aspects of their own studies and findings (as reported in Chap. 3). We also reviewed with the teachers the teaching as inquiry cycle proposed by the NZC, and began to explore foci that each teacher could use for the intercultural learning opportunities they would undertake with their own classes over the following two school terms.

As explained in Chap. 1, we approached the intercultural inquiries as a bottom-up process, whereby we supported the five teacher partners in developing their inquiries, while also taking a position of respect for each teacher's knowledge of their own class and context. As such, we probed and questioned the teachers, individually and as a group, as they began to frame their inquiries, but we refrained from prescribing specific intercultural outcomes and maintained a largely non-interventionist position with regard to other aspects of their planning and delivery.

Subsequent to the two-day hui, the teaching as inquiry model was used as an operational and reflective framework as the teachers proceeded to carry out the intercultural inquiries with their classes over the following two terms. These were documented by the research team, who observed their teacher partners' classes on at least three occasions, and undertook reflective 20–40 min debriefing conversations after each observation. At the end of the inquiry cycle in each of the five classes, we held

40–60 min summative interviews with each teacher, and 35–40 min focus group interviews with two groups of three to four students from each of the observed language classes (randomly selected from those who had consented to be interviewed)—in all, a total of 31 students over ten focus group sessions.

### ***4.8.3 Phase III (February 2017–September 2017)***

At the beginning of the 2017 school year, the five researchers and four Phase III teachers<sup>6</sup> met for another two days to share each teacher’s Phase II inquiry and consider the Phase II findings. In order to take advantage of potential insights from delayed reflection, the teachers were asked to write two reflective pieces: in the first, to be completed prior to the meeting, the teachers reflected on the inquiries they had completed in Phase II; the second was a survival memo (Brookfield, 1995) where the teachers externalised their (tacit) reflections indirectly by passing on advice on intercultural teaching to a fictional new member of the project.

In preparation for Phase III, we explored the Newton et al. (2010) principles more deeply with the teachers, and went on to examine some of the pedagogical applications of intercultural principles as exemplified in Liddicoat (2008). Preliminary ideas for the Phase III inquiries were also explored, with the teachers deciding whether to continue with the same inquiry with their 2017 class (which in all cases apart from Lillian would be a new class) or develop a new inquiry. A similar cycle to that undertaken in Phase II was then followed, whereby we documented the inquiries through classroom observations, post-lesson reflective interviews and summative interviews with the teachers, and focus group interviews with two groups of students from each class—in this case, a total of 28 students over eight focus group sessions.

### ***4.8.4 Phase IV (September 2017–December 2017)***

In the final phase of the study, each teacher wrote a reflective account of their journey throughout the project, including the rationale for their pedagogical decisions at different points, challenges, “ah-ha” moments, and perceived outcomes of their inquiries. The team then worked together to synthesise the experiences that emerged from the teachers’ research journeys in the form of a series of succinct “engaging examples of practice,” following a model of case studies already available to support teachers to develop key competencies across the different learning areas of the NZC (TKI, 2015). We framed these as a professional learning tool and a resource to support other primary/intermediate school teachers with developing their own L2 programmes to enhance their learners’ intercultural capability (East et al., 2018).

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<sup>6</sup> As previously noted, Tamara was unable to take part in Phase III.

## 4.9 Data Analysis and Reporting

The use of a number of different data collection methods and sources added richness to our data and facilitated triangulation of emerging themes throughout the analysis stages. Close collaboration and consultation within the teacher-researcher team was an important aspect of the quality assurance processes throughout the project, and regular member checking contributed to the accuracy and interpretive validity of the findings (Miles et al., 2014). As explained earlier, extensive field notes were taken during each lesson observation, and all the individual interviews and focus group discussions were audio-recorded and transcribed. In keeping with the interpretivist paradigm, we then conducted an iterative thematic analysis, with initial inductive coding to identify emerging themes, and refinement of these through a collaborative process with discussions across the team at multiple points throughout the project.

The Phase I questionnaire, interview and observation data were analysed using three frameworks as interpretive lenses: the ten Ellis (2005) principles; the six Newton et al. (2010) principles; and the key competencies in the NZC. This provided us with detailed descriptions of the cases, including each teacher's conceptualisations of effective language pedagogy, and the influence of those conceptualisations on their L2 teaching practices at that point. The Newton et al. principles were also used as initial "touchstones" during the preliminary analysis by the five researchers of the data from the Phase II and Phase III classroom observations, teacher interviews and reflections.

We also noted in Chap. 2 that Byram (e.g., 1997, 2021) framed what he perceived was required for intercultural capability in terms of helping learners to develop several *savoirs*, or "knowledges." Byram (2009) introduced the notion of the intercultural competent L2 speaker as someone who possesses "some or all of the five *savoirs* of intercultural competence to some degree" (p. 327). We drew on Byram's *savoirs* model as a starting point to examine the student focus group responses and look for evidence of the extent to which the *students* reported intercultural gains.

The *savoirs* represent different dimensions of knowledge that are relevant to the general processes that contribute not only to interactions between two (or several) individuals but also to how social groups might behave both in the target language country and in the L2 learner's own country. The five components of the model are illustrated in Table 4.2. They should not be seen in isolation or assumed to develop in language users in a linear way. Rather, they should be seen as interacting components of the successful intercultural interlocutor. Thus, in reality, the *savoirs* form part of a whole where each component interacts with the others.

Byram (2021) regarded *savoir s'engager* as "a crucial element" in the development of intercultural capability (p. 59). In particular, *savoir s'engager* encourages language learners to "reflect critically on the values, beliefs, and behaviors of their own society ... through comparative study of other societies" (Byram, 2009, p. 323). By way of expansion, East (2012) explained that this includes "comparison and contrast between cultures, and the space to explore the feelings evoked

**Table 4.2** Byram's *savoirs*

Savoir	Definition	Essential positioning
savoir être (knowing how to <i>be</i> )	The ability to <i>accept</i> that one's own values, beliefs and behaviours are not necessarily the "right" or "only" ones, and to see how those values, beliefs and behaviours might look to an outsider	This is who I am (it is neither right nor wrong, it just is)
savoir comprendre (knowing how to <i>understand</i> )	The ability to <i>compare and interpret</i> documents or events from one's own culture alongside those from another culture	This is who I am in <i>comparison</i> with who you are
savoir apprendre (knowing how to <i>learn</i> )	The ability to <i>acquire</i> new knowledge of a culture and cultural practices	I need to know <i>more</i> about who you are
savoir faire (knowing how to <i>do</i> )	The ability to <i>apply</i> knowledge of a culture and cultural practices appropriately when interacting in real time with people from the target culture	I need to <i>apply</i> that knowledge as I interact with you
savoir s'engager (knowing how to <i>engage</i> )	The ability to <i>evaluate critically</i> the perspectives, practices and products in one's own and other cultures	I need to be willing to <i>evaluate critically</i> both who I am and who you are

by the encounter with the 'other'" (p. 141). This positioning is, however, as Byram et al. (2002) put it, "never a completed process." Rather, language users need to be "constantly aware of the need to adjust, to accept and to understand other people" (p. 7).

Regarding the focus group data, mapping intercultural development, and particularly Byram's *savoir s'engager* or "perspective shift," remains challenging—not least in the case of children. In the context of adult education, Mezirow's (2009) transformative learning theory has often been drawn on, but this was not appropriate for the young learners in our study. We considered, however, that the *savoirs* represented a theoretically grounded and relevant means of helping to identify and categorise any learning and intercultural shifts that may have taken place for the learners in our project.

As our analysis progressed, we developed five components of learning through which we examined the students' journeys:

1. knowledge of facts
2. noticing differences
3. openness to difference
4. comfortableness with difference, and
5. "third place" positioning.

We need to stress that while this framework provided an accessible lens through which to consider the students' intercultural gains, the five components (as with the *savoirs*) are not intended to represent fixed or linear levels of attainment. Rather, the components are intended to indicate the general direction of intercultural development, as opposed to rigid, lock-step, unidirectional or unidimensional progressions. Indeed, it became evident that these five components can and do co-exist in practice, and the students appeared to transition both backwards and forwards between different points during the intercultural explorations and as they discussed their experiences with each other.

Emerging themes from the teachers' and students' data were shared and discussed with the teachers during each of the two-day hui, and were examined more closely in concert with the teachers' own perceptions about their students' learning. As part of this process, the full team (teachers and researchers) also collectively examined a student focus group transcript, discussing possible indicators of the students' intercultural learning and development.

In Phase IV, the emergent themes and indicators of intercultural capability were revisited by the researchers, and, along with the teachers' final reflective statements, these informed the analysis for the engaging examples of practice as well as the accounts that follow in Chaps 5 and 6. In Chap. 7, we draw further on the constructs of collaborative action research (e.g. Burns, 1999, 2019), communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991) and practitioner inquiry (Baumfield et al., 2012), among others, as we examine our journey as researchers and teacher educators, and analyse some "critical incidents" (Brandenburg, 2008; Tripp, 2012) that we identified as we looked back on the project.

### 4.9.1 *Data Source Identifiers*

It is important to note that, starting from our initial approach to the teachers and the schools, we secured teachers' consent to use their names in all public-facing documentation and in presentations. However, consistent with our undertakings to the students and their caregivers, all student data were anonymised. There are of course risks inherent in not anonymising all sources. This approach is nonetheless consistent with the requirement of the project's funder, New Zealand's Ministry of Education, that the project should be undertaken as a genuine and transparent teacher-researcher partnership through which reciprocal learning and growth are anticipated.

The remaining chapters include direct quotes from the data sources. The following conventions are used to identify the source of quotations:

- Teacher quotations: when it is not immediately apparent from the context, these are noted descriptively to indicate the source and/or timing where relevant (e.g. "Phase II hui").

- Student quotations (from focus groups): these are identified by pseudonyms for the students, followed by the language they were studying (which, therefore, identifies the teacher, but maintains the anonymity of the students). In the case of students studying Mandarin, they are distinguished by Mandarin 1 (taught by Lillian) and Mandarin 2 (taught by Kelly).

The next three chapters present the data we collected, with specific focus on the students (Chap. 5), the teachers (Chap. 6), and ourselves as researchers/teacher educators (Chap. 7).

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