

Task-Based PBL for Developing the Interculturality of Chinese Teachers Globally

任务式问题学习法在全球汉语教师跨文化胜任力发展方面的运用和反思

Xiangyun Du, Professor and Director
MadsJakobKirkebæk, Associate professor
Confucius Institute for Innovation and Learning, Aalborg University

1. Introduction

By the end of 2012, 400 Confucius Institutes and 535 Confucius Classrooms had been established in 108 countries, with more than 20,000 full-time and part-time teachers and over 655,000 registered students. More than 16,000 cultural activities were held, attracting up to 9.48 million participants (Hanban, 2012).

Today, teaching and learning Chinese as a foreign language (FL) does not take place only in the classrooms of Chinese departments at a limited number of universities in China, as was the case two decades ago. With the rapid establishment of overseas language institutes such as the Confucius Institutes and Confucius Classrooms, teaching and learning Chinese has become a global phenomenon. Chinese teachers are also experiencing dramatic changes. Where they mainly used to teach Chinese language and culture at a certain number of universities in China, they now teach at many different kinds of educational institutions (primary schools, secondary schools, high schools, universities, adult schools, etc.) all over the world. Chinese teachers are no longer teaching in or about one culture, but in and about many cultures and cultural contexts.

Therefore, context is playing an increasingly important role in teaching and learning Chinese as an FL in the global age. There is much more to it than just teaching THE language and THE culture; it is considered more important to help people living in many contexts learn how to communicate with Chinese people by using the Chinese language in diverse social and cultural contexts. FL teachers in a global age are expected not only to have the requisite knowledge of language and culture, but more importantly, to develop their interculturality, often referred to as cultural understanding, critical cultural awareness (Holliday, 2011) or global cultural consciousness (Kumaravadivelu 2008), and intercultural competency for efficient communication (Byram, 1989; Byram et al., 1994). This new demand creates numerous challenges and requires that teachers assume new roles and responsibilities.

The changing role of teaching in the globalized context challenges the identity of FL teachers, including that of Chinese language teachers. How can these teachers be equipped with the skills and competencies to face these challenges? In this paper we articulate, illuminate, and increase teacher consciousness of given contextual factors that may influence teaching and learning Chinese as an FL. We propose a learning-centered approach, Task-Based PBL, in the teaching and learning of foreign languages in general and Chinese in particular in an intercultural and globalized context. We argue that teaching Chinese as an FL in the global age involves not only the skills needed to transfer knowledge of the language, but also, and more importantly, a complex process of creating critical cultural consciousness and developing interculturality through continual self-reflection and constant negotiation with the context in which the students are situated. In the latter part of this paper, we also propose a framework for a Task-Based PBL approach to teacher development, which aims to develop language teachers' interculturality in a global context.

2. The power of context in teaching and learning Chinese as an FL in a global age

Teaching and learning Chinese language and culture in the current era is a process of globalized learning; therefore, it is influenced by many factors both inside and outside of the classroom. The context in which teaching and learning take place plays a critical role in defining the choice of teaching content, methods, and assessment, among other elements, as well as the learning outcome. At the same time, all teaching and learning activities continue to negotiate with the context. It is beyond the scope of this study to pinpoint all possible influencing factors in the negotiation of language teaching and learning with their contexts; however, our previous work (Kirkebæk et al. 2013) has identified five factors that we find important, including: 1) teachers' views on globalization, 2) teachers' views on and conceptual understanding of culture, 3) teachers' views on language teaching and learning approaches, 4) roles of the teacher and student, and 5) establishment of a supportive learning environment.

2.1 Teachers' views on globalization in relation to culture

Views and debates on globalization vary. In the field of foreign language education, Kumaravadivelu (2008) summarizes three different views on globalization in relation to culture: those of hyper-globalizers, localizers, and glocalizers. Hyper-globalizers tend to believe in homogenization and in a cultural hierarchy, with the cultures of certain superpowers (such as American culture, Western culture) being dominant over others. In comparison, localizers are inclined to protect and preserve local traditional beliefs and practices that are perceived to be threatened by global cultural flow, and believe that globalization will result in heterogenization of cultures. The glocalizers believe that cultural transmission is a two-way process in which cultures are continually shaping and reshaping each other in direct and indirect ways. They disagree with the convention of seeing the world in terms of a dichotomy of "self" vs. "other", instead believing that the local and the global are in the process of accommodating and assimilating with each other.

In our work, we have identified ourselves as glocalizers, holding the belief that globalization increases the complexity of how cultures (co)exist. Teaching Chinese in an intercultural/overseas context is neither merely transferring the knowledge of Chinese language to the local context nor intruding upon local values with the singular truth of Chinese culture. Instead, it involves a process of negotiating with the local context to create an environment of mutual influencing and mutual learning between the local context and the Chinese context as represented by the teacher.

2.2 Teachers' views on and conceptual understanding of culture

Culture is a concept with a wide range of definitions across different disciplines (such as education, cultural studies, linguistics, psychology, business studies, etc.), in accordance with their historical contexts and applications. The understanding of culture also varies in different paradigms. From a structuralist point of view, cultures are often artifacts, beliefs, and customs. To functionalists, culture is about group identity, which expresses value and establishes stereotyping (Hecht et al., 2005). These two dimensions form part of what Jensen (2007) refers to as the descriptive concepts of culture, which highlight high cultures (film, art,

poetry, literature) and national cultures. This approach tends to stress collective identification with a group and produces a fixed image of group identity (Hecht, Baldwin and Faulkner, 2005). In contrast, with an approach that highlights process, culture is seen as an active process of meaning-making with a focus on change, development, practices, and procedures of culture (Hecht, Baldwin and Faulkner, 2005), which presents a more complex concept of culture. In this conceptualization, culture is seen as a set of open structures without clear borders. It is temporal, emergent, unpredictable, and constantly changing, and is seen as consisting of shared knowledge, meanings, and values. At the same time, this approach also recognizes that not everyone in a nation may share these same elements of culture (Kahn, 1989; Jensen, 2007).

Teachers' views on culture influence their ways of teaching and learning of an FL in many ways. In our work, we take our conceptual departure for understanding culture in the field of teaching and learning Chinese from a process perspective, which we believe, allows for the possibility of conceptualizing Chinese language and culture as dynamic, complex, and multidimensional, as well as changing and developing in the globalized age. This perspective also allows us not only to see what Chinese language and culture are, but also to see how they function in global communication.

2.3 Teachers' views on language teaching and learning approaches

Research on foreign language acquisition remains a new area, with less than 50 years' history and little consensus on how foreign languages (FL) are learned (Willis and Willis, 2007). Views on and paradigms for language learning vary and disagree with each other. Two major approaches prevail in the current debate on FL teaching and learning: the grammar-translation approach and the communication approach (Lightbown and Spada, 2006). The grammar-translation approach is based on the belief that learning a foreign language is the acquisition of conscious knowledge (Cook, 2008), and often emphasizes explanation of grammatical points. In this approach, students are expected to conform to the convention defining the nature of the target language, such as words and sentence patterns. The teaching and learning methods used in this approach are often focused on memorization-oriented exercises as supplements to lectures. Accuracy in producing the target forms is often used as the success criteria for learning outcome. Teachers are in charge of classroom activities. They give presentations to introduce the grammar and function of a certain language to the students, and students are expected to master the rules and patterns of this language through practice. The ultimate goal is for students to reproduce the target language spontaneously and flexibly (Willis, 1996).

The communicative approach is based on holistic thinking that prioritizes the importance of meanings in the target language and interaction in which learners are provided with opportunities to use the language for communication (Lightbown and Spada, 2006). Instead of merely the production of the language form, teaching and learning methods are focused on a process in which learners are encouraged to engage themselves in using the language. The outcome of learning is not only assessed by the mastery of language forms and structures, but also, more importantly, by learners' capability of using the target language in communication settings.

The current practice of language teaching has been criticized for lack of an appropriate connection of language and culture and for ignoring the complexity of an individual's cultural growth (Kumaravadivelu, 2008, Holliday, 2011). According to Kumaravadivelu (2008,6), traditional approaches to language teaching and learning have been criticized as giving little attention to helping learners develop the linguistic ability to use the target language in culturally appropriate ways with the specific purpose of performance, such as greeting, requesting, expressing gratitude and apology, etc. In addition, recent approaches to cultural teaching, which are based on a simplistic view of culture and cultural teaching and learning, focus rather narrowly on cultural arts and artifacts or cultural rites and rituals instead of on developing global cultural consciousness among language learners, teachers, and teacher educators (Kumaravadivelu, 2008).

Scholars tend to agree that the predominant approach to the teaching and learning of culture in the language classroom has been mostly information-oriented (Byram, 1989; Byram et al., 1994; Kumaravadivelu 2008; Holliday 2011; Kirkebæk et al. 2013). This approach is very much based on the descriptive concept of understanding culture, which assumes that culture can be seen as a subject with knowledge that can be transferred from the teacher to the students. The expected learning outcome of this approach can only be a limited view of a national culture in a certain historical context.

However, if the objective of teaching and learning about foreign cultures in a language classroom is to develop the learners' interculturality, it is not sufficient to provide only a limited amount of information about the target culture (Byram, 1989; Byram et al., 1994; Kumaravadivelu, 2008; Holliday, 2011; Kirkebæk et al., 2013). From a constructivist perspective, a learner-centered approach is needed, with the assumption that learning takes place in the interactive process of individuals and their social and cultural contexts through activities that help generate meaning and provoke reflection on their experiences (Du, 2012; Kirkebæk et al., 2013).

Taking a globalized view and a complex approach to the understanding of culture, we sincerely believe that a teacher-centered approach with a grammar-translation view of language learning and a descriptive approach to understanding culture are not applicable in teaching and learning foreign languages in the globalized context. Instead, the aim of teaching and learning a foreign language (Chinese in our case) for better communication and cultural understanding by generating meanings and by communicating in this language. With this view, we also believe that it is time for the role of teaching in language education to be transformed.

2.4 Roles of the teacher and student in language education

Following from the above discussion, the roles of the teacher and student in language education are being challenged as well. Teaching activities play a different role in a learner-centered environment than they do in a teacher-centered environment. Instead of conveying knowledge to students, the teacher's role is mainly to facilitate self-directed and active learning by creating a supportive environment. The teacher is not expected to deliver all the knowledge and skills of the target language that the students must acquire. Although the teacher should still lecture, his or her major role is to create opportunities for dialogue,

discussion, negotiation, and participation so that students can learn and develop the skills and competences of communication by using this language. In a learner-centered environment, it is not enough that students listen carefully to the teacher's lectures, respond when prompted, and possibly ask clarifying questions, as this leads only to passive learning, of knowledge transferred from the teacher. The teacher can and should expect the students to play an active role in the teaching and learning process by taking responsibility not only for their own but also for their peers' learning. Students should be involved in deciding what to learn, how to learn it, and how to evaluate their learning outcomes. Only when students are given ownership of their own learning will they participate in the knowledge-creation process with high motivation.

In our work, we have observed a substantial amount of "culture clash" when Chinese language teachers who have been professionally educated and trained in China start their work of teaching Chinese to non-natives in an overseas context. The teachers carry with them the values and responsibilities of being a language teacher developed in their home country in order to transfer or deliver the knowledge they have obtained to the host institute, and only unexpectedly realize that the local institute's expectations of their roles and responsibilities are different. Many other aspects of their training are also challenged, such as relationships with students and colleagues, choice of teaching content (textbooks and materials), and teaching methods. These challenges force them to reexamine their beliefs in their identities as language teachers. This is the case particularly when a teacher finds that the institute at which he or she works encourages and values a learner-centered approach, which is different from what the teacher is used to. Therefore, one of the things we have repeatedly learned in the past years' work on developing Chinese language teaching in Denmark is that it is not enough for us merely to believe in a constructivism-based, learner-centered approach to teaching and learning; it is more important to invite all teachers, with their diverse social, cultural, educational, and individual backgrounds, to reflect on how language and culture are learned, how language and culture can and should be taught in our global and local contexts.

2.5 The establishment of a supportive learning environment

All of the above-discussed questions lead to the final factor we want to address here: a supportive learning environment for language education. This is a factor without clearly-identified perspectives and approaches, simply because there is no agreement on what constitutes a supportive learning environment.

Departing from a globalizer's perspective and the complex concept of understanding culture, and based on the belief that learning is constructive and takes place in a social context as a meaning-seeking process, we propose a task-based and problem-based approach to teaching and learning Chinese language and culture in the intercultural context in which we are situated. In the next section, we present the conceptual background, method, and implementation of this approach.

3. Task-Based PBL as a methodology for teaching and learning Chinese as an FL

The use of Task-Based Teaching and Learning (TBTL) in foreign language education has been studied and practiced for many years. Although it is based on the belief that learners

should be placed at the center of the classroom, it is often accommodated within a teacher-led classroom and thus can still be regarded as a teacher-fronted methodology in practice (Willis and Willis, 2007, 3). The Problem-Based learning method (PBL), sharing similar learning premises with TBTL, focuses on inviting students into an unknown knowledge zone with teachers acting as facilitators instead of instructors (Du, 2012). The teaching and learning setting is often part of a real-life scenario in which learners have to develop self-directed strategies and become independent and collaborative learners, and the problem-solving process often goes beyond the teacher's knowledge sphere. Therefore, combining these two concepts may allow for an understanding of foreign language education that involves not only teaching the specific target language in a manner that creates a formal competency in acquiring currently required knowledge, but also a process by which individual learners are encouraged to develop themselves, their worldviews, and their cultural understanding and awareness (Du, 2012). Our first contribution to the field of foreign language teaching and learning was to explore how the TBTL and Problem-Based Learning (PBL) approaches that have been applied at Aalborg University for more than 30 years could be connected and possibly enrich each other in teaching and learning Chinese in a Danish context. In the rest of this section, we briefly introduce the learning premises of this concept, its principles, and its applications. Two examples of using Task-Based PBL in Chinese language and culture teaching are also provided to illustrate how they are used in our specific context.

Our proposal of Task-Based PBL in language education is based on four premises for language learning and teaching. The first premise is that students come to their first Chinese lesson with possible prior knowledge of the world in general and of the skills of language acquisition in particular that may contribute to their learning of Chinese as a foreign language. The students are not "empty bottles" that it is solely the teacher's responsibility to fill. The second premise, which follows from the first, is that students' acquisition of Chinese is not exclusively the result of the teacher's efforts; rather, new knowledge, insights, and competences are constructed and result from negotiations among the teacher, students, subject matter (Chinese), and context. The third premise is that meaningful communication and interaction with the teacher and with peers is a prerequisite for the individual student's learning and acquisition of the target language. Acquisition of language takes place as a result of interaction among individuals in a given socio-cultural context. The fourth and last premise is that language learning is a meaning-seeking process and that students therefore must cooperate and participate in meaningful activities related to the real world outside the classroom in order to acquire the target language.

These premises for teaching and learning have important implications for the role of the teacher, his or her beliefs on and attitudes towards how an FL is and should be learned, his or her expectations of the students, and his or her choice of teaching content and methods.

In the task literature, various definitions of task have been offered that differ in both scope and formulation (Branden, 2006: 2-12). However, there seems to be general agreement on the criteria that a language activity must satisfy; therefore, we use the following four criteria to establish what qualifies as a "task" (Ellis, 2009: 223) instead of any one definition: 1) The primary focus should be on meaning. 2) There should be some kind of "gap." 3) Learners should largely have to rely on their own resources. 4) There should be a clearly defined outcome other than the use of language.

In the first stage of our work, we tended to relate the tasks we developed to the task literature in terms of definitions, types, difficulty levels, procedures (pre-task, during-

task, and post-task), and more. Our recent work suggests that dividing tasks into fixed types is not always necessary since the ways to define and categorize tasks are diverse and depend on their perspectives, objectives, and outcomes. Teaching and learning are highly context-dependent activities, and task designers should bear in mind the four above-mentioned characteristics of a task rather than task types.

Box 1 shows an example of how a Task-Based PBL method is applied in a language classroom, with the teacher functioning as a designer, facilitator, and evaluator.

Box 1 Task example: Expressing agreement in Chinese

Target group: CEFR* A2 (Waystage).

*Common European Framework of Reference for Languages

Teaching and learning objective: How to express strong, neutral, and hesitant agreement in Chinese.

Teaching and learning method: An ordering and sorting task that involves categorizing items.

Teaching materials: A table with fifteen different expressions of agreement in Chinese.

Task structure(including three phases:pre, during, and post-task (Ellis 2003)):

Pre-task: The teacher asks the students to discuss and make a list of expressions of agreement in their mother tongue.

During-task:The teacher pairs up students and asks them to divide the following Chinese expressions of agreement into three categories: strong agreement, agreement, and hesitant agreement.

好，只能这样儿啦	对是对。但不十分对	那自然了
是啊	我完全同意	行，让我试试看
谁说不是呢	行	愿意不愿意都就这样儿吧
有点对	毫无疑问	对的
可以	好的	一点不错

Strong agreement	Agreement	Hesitant agreement

Post-task:Students present their results to each other. Results will probably not be exactly the same, and the teacher may use this to discuss how different contexts may lead to different interpretations and categorizations of the selected expressions of agreement.

Task designer: MadsJakobKirkebak

There is no fixed way of using a task in the foreign language classroom. With a different student group, this sample task can be further extended to another task. For example, the

teacher may pair up students and ask them to make up a dialogue about a topic of their own choice, using as many as possible of the fifteen expressions of agreement in the table. Afterward, students read their dialogues aloud and ask each other questions about grammar, vocabulary, pragmatics, etc.

Box 2 illustrates an example of the Task-Based PBL approach to learning Chinese culture.

Task example: Youth culture in China

Task group: University/high school students.

Teaching and learning objective: Develop understanding of Chinese youth culture from a cross-cultural perspective and gain cross-cultural understanding from learning by teaching.

Teaching and learning method: Learning by teaching (designing a task used in another learning and teaching setting). Students are asked to teach about youth culture by designing a task and implementing it in a lower secondary school classroom (for Chinese language and culture).

Teaching materials: Variable, designed by students.

Time duration: Four units (one to two hours each).

Task structure(including three phases:pre, during, and post-task (Ellis 2003)):

Pre-task: Unit 1

Student discussion in class (can be in groups or as a class):

- 1) How do you understand youth culture in general?
- 2) What are the characteristics of youth culture in Denmark in your opinion?
- 3) What aspects of Chinese youth culture are you interested in? Why?

During-task:

Step 1 (Unit 1): Students are told to design a task for teaching youth culture in a high school or lower-secondary school. They are divided into groups for task design and delivery. The teacher should have made an agreement with a school for this event beforehand.

Step 2 (Unit 2): Students discuss in groups how to teach Chinese youth culture to school students, what content they should include, how the content should be delivered in the form of tasks in order to maximize learning outcomes, and how to design these tasks for the target students.

Step 3 (Unit 2): Students present a teaching plan with the designed tasks as a group and get feedback from other groups and the teacher.

Step 4: Rehearsal within the group (optionally in spare time).

Step 5 (Unit 3): Students teach the planned course in a school classroom (with the teacher and other groups as observers).

Post-task (Unit 4):The teacher summarizes students' learning-through-teaching performance and theoretical reflections on youth culture (in China). Students are encouraged to reflect on and peer-evaluate their learning through the teaching experiences with the teacher's facilitation.

Task designer: Xiangyun Du 杜翔云

Both examples (boxes 1 and 2) are in line with our belief in a communicative approach to language learning and a complex concept of culture, both of which require a learner-centered approach to teaching and learning. Learning Chinese is not only about knowing the language, but also about understanding how people use the language. Learning Chinese culture is more than learning about artifacts (artifacts from history in particular) and a fixed set of information, ideas, rules, norms, and values for the community and nation. Rather, it is more important to understand that there is no one truth about THE Chinese culture. Instead of giving students one fixed and static picture, a Task-Based PBL approach encourages learners to communicate efficiently with the people, communities, and contexts that use the target language, and to reflect upon the so-called Chinese culture by analyzing its diversity and ongoing change process. An ultimate goal of this approach is that learners develop a critical and reflective approach to the world and the ability to cope with challenges arising from intercultural encounters in a globalized society.

Our experiences in the past years suggest that tasks are valuable tools that can motivate both teachers and students in the teaching and learning process. Teachers can transform exercises or other traditional language and information-based culture-teaching activities into tasks and can facilitate active participation, interaction, and communication so as to make learning a better and more rewarding experience for students. In a Task-Based PBL environment, both teachers and students must agree on a common understanding of teaching and learning. How can foreign language learning take place in a more efficient way? In what way is a certain teaching and learning method applied? The answers depend on the educational and learning objectives. If the aim of teaching Chinese is to prepare students for a multiple-choice test, a teacher-led, information-based approach may be more appropriate. If the purpose is to prepare students with global cultural awareness and the competences to become global professionals, a learner-centered approach such as Task-Based PBL may prove more productive.

Both language teachers and learners must also understand that their roles are different from those in a teacher-centered environment. Students should be the center of the teaching and learning process. They should not be passive receivers of knowledge, but active participants and co-constructors of new knowledge and competencies. Teachers should not act as “knowers” and masters, but as facilitators of learning. The teacher’s primary role is to motivate students to learn on their own, explore new things, and develop methods that fit their learning style, even if this means creating new ways of learning that the teacher did not expect.

4. Task-Based PBL as a methodology for developing language teachers’ interculturality

Facing the challenges of globalization, foreign language education is undergoing changes that require language teachers to keep up-to-date with developments in the field, regularly review and evaluate their teaching skills, collaboratively develop new ideas and activities in order to improve student learning, and engage in critical reflection and continue professional development activities.

Two concepts, training and development, are often used to describe the scope and goals of teacher education and professional development activities for language teachers (Richards and Farrell 2005). According to Richards and Farrell (2005, 3-5), “training” refers to activities directly focused on a teacher’s present responsibilities, and is typically aimed at

short-term and immediate goals such as learning how to open a lesson, adapting the textbook to match the class, using classroom aids, etc. The content of training is usually determined by experts and delivered in standard formats or prescriptions. "Development" refers to general growth that is not focused on a specific job, but rather serves a long-term goal and aims to facilitate progression in teachers' understanding of the teaching process and of themselves as teachers. Development often takes the form of reflective activities examining different dimensions of a teacher's practice and experience.

A number of approaches to conceptualizing teacher learning have been summarized by Richards and Farrell (2005, 6):

- 1) Teacher learning as skill learning, which focuses on the development of skills and competencies that teachers must master.
- 2) Teacher learning as a cognitive process, which focuses on how teachers' beliefs and thinking influence their teaching and learning.
- 3) Teacher learning as personal construction, which is based on the belief that learners, instead of passively receiving knowledge, actively participate in the process of constructing knowledge.
- 4) Teacher learning as reflective practice, which emphasizes the importance of teachers learning from experience through focused reflection.

In our work of facilitating Chinese teachers' development we draw inspiration from Schon's reflection theories and Richards and Farrell's (2005) work on professional development for language teachers. With these influences, and following the principles of the Task-Based PBL concept (Du 2012: 36-61), we have established a framework for a Task-Based PBL approach to teachers' learning, which draws upon a range of educational philosophies, including those mentioned above. The following is a list of the key principles of this framework that serve as guidelines for designing and conducting teacher learning activities.

- 1) Teachers shall be highly motivated to update their professional knowledge and skills and to critically reflect upon their cultural experiences and growth. They shall be encouraged to explore their own beliefs and thinking processes about teaching and learning language and culture and to examine how these may improve their classroom practice.
- 2) Teachers shall be invited to reflect upon how a foreign language is learned, how language and culture are connected, and what roles are played by a language teacher in the globalized age.
- 3) Teachers shall be placed at the core of all development activities and be invited to actively participate in the decision-making process of these activities. It is important that the teachers obtain concrete tools that they can take home to use in their teaching practice.
- 4) Teacher learning activities shall be organized through focused reflection upon the nature of experience and the meaning of their prior experiences. Mutual sharing of knowledge and experience is a valuable professional resource (Richards and Farrell, 2005). Language teachers should critically reflect upon their own cultural trajectory and growth. Better understanding of their own experiences can be helpful to improve their teaching practices.
- 5) Teachers shall be encouraged to develop strategies and actions for improving their teaching via collaborative work such as peer observation, peer tutoring, peer evaluation,

etc. Peer learning shall be used as a powerful tool to develop cultural understanding and create critical cultural consciousness.

- 6) Teacher learning activities, particularly the development of interculturality, shall be associated with the real world. The activities shall be focused on meaning-making instead of mere pedagogical theories. All teachers are negotiating the particular social-learning context in which they are situated. Through teacher learning activities, teachers shall be expected to work on concrete problem analysis and develop coping strategies for their situated cultural contexts.

In a Task-Based PBL approach to teacher learning, there are no fixed procedures for designing activities; rather, focus is placed on the teacher's critical reflection on his/her experiences and needs for further improvement. Three phases are recommended for implementing the six principles.

Phase one: Conceptual understanding of being a language teacher in a global age. The teachers who are motivated to participate in the teacher learning activities shall be invited to reflect on the following five questions, which follow from the five factors influencing the roles of language teachers in a global age discussed at the beginning of this paper.

- 1) What is my view of globalization?

The first question a foreign language and culture teacher needs to consider and critically reflect upon is where he/she places him/herself within the categories of hyper-globalizer, localizer, and glocalizer.

- 2) What is my view/belief on culture?

How does the teacher view the connection between culture and language? Does the teacher see culture as a descriptive or complex concept? These are essential questions for teaching and learning foreign languages in a global age because they can have serious implications for the planning and execution of language and culture teaching.

- 3) What approach to teaching and learning foreign language and culture should I use?

A teacher's answer to this question is highly dependent on his/her view of how a foreign language and culture are learned. Whether one adopts a grammar-translation approach or a communicative approach is associated with one's beliefs about the goals of teaching and learning a foreign language. The choice of teaching approach is also closely related to the teacher's views on language and culture, addressed in question 2.

- 4) What roles should the ideal teacher and student play in the classroom in an intercultural context?

Answers to this question are based on the teacher's responses to the previous three questions. Regardless of the views the teacher holds, it is important for him/her to communicate these views with students. Good communication, with clearly stated expectations and mutually agreed-upon teaching and learning goals, is extremely important to efficient learning.

- 5) What constitutes a supportive learning environment and how do I contribute to it?

What constitutes a supportive learning environment depends on many things—not only on the answers to the previous questions, but also on other aspects arising from the specific context.

Phase 2: Reflective practice, which includes three steps: problem identification, problem analysis, and problem solving. The teachers shall be invited to reflect on their teaching and learning experiences with the foreign language in order to identify concrete issues and challenges facing their lived contexts. Then, working in teams, they are to analyze the nature

of these issues and challenges in order to develop a better understanding of the situation. Afterward, the teachers shall rely on the resource of peer learning to collaborate in developing coping strategies and potential solutions (for example, new ideas and teaching designs).

Phase 3: Implementation. The teachers shall be encouraged to apply these coping strategies to their real-life contexts and implement these solutions in their teaching practice.

Phase 4: Evaluation. The teachers shall be facilitated to work together to evaluate their new teaching experiments. A range of evaluation activities for the purposes of self-evaluation and peer evaluation shall be employed to address how to further improve the teachers' teaching and learning.

In summary, Task-Based PBL is not a context-independent approach. One of the major conclusions from our first study, *Exploring Task-Based PBL in Chinese Teaching and Learning* (Du and Kirkebæk, 2012), was that the use of Task-Based PBL in teaching and learning Chinese is rather complex, and that the effectiveness of this approach is highly context-dependent. This is especially true when it is used for teacher development in relation to interculturality (Kirkebæk et al. 2012). The organizers of teacher learning activities must always keep in mind that it is important to discuss the success criteria of such activities with the participant teachers. Even with all these considerations, based on our previous experiences, we found it challenging to evaluate the development of interculturality in the teachers who participated in the activities and in ourselves as facilitators.

5. Reflection and further perspectives

In the field of teaching Chinese as a foreign language, teachers who were educated and professionally trained in China have gone through a change process: where they previously taught Chinese in one country (China) and one cultural setting (Chinese culture, as they believe it to exist), they now teach in many different contexts all over the world. This change of context can be dramatic, and can, to a great extent, challenge teachers' identities and ways of teaching. Increased globalization means it will not be enough for the teachers to learn about one or two foreign (teaching and learning) cultures, such as those of the United States or Denmark. Instead, they have to develop a global cultural consciousness/interculturality and teach accordingly. In this paper, we proposed a Task-Based PBL concept as a learner-centered approach to the reflective practice of teaching and learning Chinese not only as language acquisition, but also a process of understanding cultures and participating in intercultural interaction and communication. In this way, the teaching and learning of Chinese is related to a broader social transformation in the development of the knowledge society and in the process of globalization.

References

Branden, Van den. K. (2006). "Introduction: Task-based Language Teaching in a Nutshell." In *Task-Based Language Education – From Theory to Practice*, edited by Kris Van den Branden, 1-16. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Byram, M., Morgan, C., & Colleagues (1994). *Teaching-and-learning language-and-culture*. UK: Multilingual Matters Ltd.

- Byram, M. (1989). *Cultural studies in foreign language education*. Clevedon : Multilingual Matters Ltd.
- Byram, M. (1994). *Culture and language learning in higher education*. Clevedon, Avon: Multilingual Matters.
- Cook, V. (2008). *Second Language Learning and Language Teaching*. 4th ed. London: Hodder Education.
- Du, X.Y. (2012). A proposal of Task-Based PBL in Chinese teaching and learning. In X.Y. Du & M.J. Kirkebæk (Eds.) *Exploring task-based PBL in Chinese teaching and learning*. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing. 36-61.
- Du, X. Y., & Kirkebæk, M. J. (2012). Exploring task-based PBL in Chinese teaching and learning in a Danish context. In X.Y. Du & M.J. Kirkebæk (Eds.) *Exploring task-based PBL in Chinese teaching and learning*. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing. 172-185.
- Ellis, R. (2003). *Task-based Language Learning and Teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hanban. 2012. *Hanban Annual Report 2012*.
<http://www.hanban.org/report/pdf/2012.pdf> Retrieved June 18th, 2014.
- Holliday, A. (2011). *Intercultural communication and ideology*. London: SAGE.
- Hecht, M. L., Baldwin, J. R., & Faulkner, S. L. (2005). The (in) conclusion of the matter: Shifting signs of models of culture. In J. R. Baldwin, S. L. Faulkner, M. L. Hecht & S. L. Lindsley (Eds.) *Redefining culture: Perspective across the disciplines*. USA: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Jensen, I. (2007). *Introduction to cultural understanding*. Roskilde: Roskilde University Press.
- Kahn, J. S. (1989). Culture. demise or resurrection? *Critique of Anthropology*, 9(2), 5-25.
- Kirkebæk, M. J., Du, X. Y. and Jensen, A. A. (2013). The power of context in teaching and learning culture. In: Kirkebæk, M. J., Du, X. Y. and Jensen, A. A.(ed.) *Teaching and Learning Culture – Negotiating the Context*. pp.1-12. Rotterdam: SENSE Publisher.
- Kumaravadivelu, B. (2008). *Cultural globalization and language education*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Lightbown, P. M., and Spada. N. (2006). *How Languages Are Learned*, 3rd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Richards, J.C. and Farrell, T.S.C. (2005). *Professional development for language teachers – strategies for teacher learning*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Willis, D, and Willis. J. (2007). *Doing Task-based Teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Willis, J. (1996). *A Framework for Task-based Learning*. Harlow: Longman Pearson Education.