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Constructing critical intercultural competence and appreciation of diversity: The case of exchange student teachers in Finland

Martina Paatela-Nieminen

Abstract

This chapter describes the application of an intertextual model in intercultural art education. It concentrates on students who participated in an Erasmus+ EU Programme and attended in the Faculty of Educational Sciences and Teacher Education at the University of Helsinki. The study focuses on Erasmus students who attended a course in Art and Culture. The course deals with art history, but the subject is not taught linearly from the beginning of time to contemporary art in the traditional way. Instead, as the course's perspective is intertextual, the students are asked to study contemporary art as a starting point and open-endedly weave relations to older art and cultural forms. They study Finnish art in relation to the art of the students' local "cultures" as well as in relation to the global cultural memory. This process was an intersubjective, collaborative and somewhat unpredictable adventure for the students. My interest was to find out how the applied intercultural method allowed the students to develop what I will refer to as critical intertextual competence. The study material is based on the students' (e-)portfolios, their artistic end products as well as their video-recorded presentations.

The results show that, although the students all had different ideas, they gained complex understanding during their intercultural dialogue and co-construction of an intercultural work of art. The intertextual method is a valid tool for developing critical intercultural competence that is here understood as a continuous process. However, due to the method's open-endedness, the process is challenging. Learning about art history intertextually was found to be inspiring for the students and it explained to them how visual art is not a closed entity but widely connected to culture.

Keywords: intertextual, relations, intercultural, competence, Erasmus, contemporary art, art education, art history

Introduction

To become interculturally competent is considered important today because we live in a world of cultural, linguistic, religious, and philosophical diversity (Finnish National Core Curriculum, FNCC, 2016, p. 22). However, there is no clear consensus on what intercultural competence means. The renewed FNCC for basic education has introduced a new transversal competence, namely cultural competence, interaction and self-expression (FNCC, 2016, p. 21). This curriculum understands cultural diversity positively (FNCC, 2016, p. 22). Competence is seen to be a fundamental entity that includes skills, knowledge, values, attitudes, will and ability to act relevantly in a situation (FNCC, 2016, p. 21; Unesco, 2013, p.12). Cultural competence adds respect for human rights, appreciative interaction and a means for expressing oneself and views of others (FNCC, 2016, p. 22). However, the curricular document does not present any concrete methods for becoming interculturally competent.

Dialogue is the basis for all interaction and intercultural dialogue has only recently begun to be applied and explained by institutions (Council of Europe, 2018). Intercultural competence is understood as dialogue and interaction that offer a place for learning from each other (Hartikainen & Mattila, 2011, pp. 85). Intercultural dialogue is encouraged because it strives to make pupils aware of their plural identities, including gender, class, age, ethnicity, region, history, nationality and occupation (Hartikainen & Mattila, 2011, pp. 85-89; Unesco, 2011; Council of Europe, 2008, p. 17; Unesco, 2013, p. 10). It also helps them to know their own cultural heritage in order to construct a cultural identity (FNCC, 2016, pp. 22). Dialogue is also seen as a process that encourages one to question certainties (Unesco, 2013, p. 14). Intercultural competence thus includes a critical aspect. Good dialogue requires the ability to act in a way that is built on motivation and a sense of competence (Halinen, 2011, p. 77). To become interculturally competent one needs to take part in a dialogue, as defined in the Council of Europe White Paper: *“Intercultural dialogue is understood as an open and respectful exchange of views between individuals, groups with different ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds and heritage on the basis of mutual understanding and respect”* (Council of Europe, 2008, p. 10). This definition has been recently extended. Besides focusing on socio-cultural aspects, it is also important to ensure that intercultural dialogue takes diversity into account as a resource (Saillant, 2017).

The argument of this paper is that an intertextual model is valid for teaching cultural competence, interaction and self-expression. I also argue that the proposed intertextual method and model can develop critical intercultural competence in teacher education. The background of the intertextual method is to be found in post-structuralism, postmodernism, semiotics and linguistics. The method was originally developed for art education and artistic research (Paatela-Nieminen, 1996; 2000) and intercultural art education research (Paatela-Nieminen, 2008; Paatela-Nieminen, Itkonen & Talib, 2016). Intertextuality is a thinking attitude for studying, interpreting and producing meanings in relation to a variety of texts, for example, visual, verbal, auditory and kinaesthetic (related to movement), and it is done open-endedly (Paatela-Nieminen 1996; 2000). A work (of art) under study is understood as text which consists of a methodological field of the textual networks of several sign systems and cultural connections. This offers an infinity of possibilities for the readers to produce plural meanings as well as bringing their unconscious to the open-ended reading process (Paatela-Nieminen, 2000). The broad definition of text (visual, verbal etc.) has also been defined in the Finnish National Core Curriculum (FNCC, 2016, p. 23). Art educators have also been encouraged to read art as text (Savva & Telemachou, 2016, p. 149) and to view it in wider cultural contexts (Hatton, 2017).

Intertextuality applies dialogue as defined by Mikhail Bakhtin as an intersection of textual surfaces in a space where any text absorbs and transforms another (Kristeva, 1993a). The textual intersection includes the subject as both a writer and reader of texts. A text is thus both a dialogue (subjective reading and writing process) and an ambivalence of several different discourses at the same time (history, society and culture). A text develops at the intersection of these two aspects (Kristeva, 1993a, p. 64-91; Paatela-Nieminen, 2000). Dialogue and ambivalence are parts of intertextuality and refer to the palpability of signs that contain an infinity of possibilities (Kristeva, 1984). I argue that intertextuality can work as a method for intercultural dialogue because it focuses on the social and cultural in dialogue as well as the ambivalence and infinity of possibilities in signs, thus producing an awareness of pluralities and diversities.

This chapter describes the application of the intertextual model (see Paatela-Nieminen & Itkonen, 2017) in intercultural art education and examines students who participated in an Erasmus+ EU Programme for Education, Training, Youth and Sport and who came to study in the unit of research and teaching in the Faculty of Educational Sciences at the University of Helsinki. Specifically, the study focuses on seven Erasmus students who attended a course entitled Art & Culture (5 ECTS). The course deals with art history, but the subject is, however, not taught linearly from the beginning of times to contemporary art in the traditional way. Instead, as the course's viewpoint is intertextual, the students are asked to study contemporary art as a starting point and then open-endedly weave relations from there to older art and culture. They study Finnish art in relation to the art of the students' local cultures as well as in relation to the global cultural memory. This process was an intersubjective, collaborative adventure for the students who did not know beforehand how it would end. The specific research question asks *how cultural diversity is experienced, discussed and produced when participating in intersubjective and intercultural dialogue, in relation to the proposed intertextual method*. The question is answered by testing the intertextual model in intercultural art education a) when relating contemporary art intertextually to older art and art history, b) when studying Finnish art in relation to the art of the students' local cultures as well as in relation to the cultural memory, and c) when examining the Erasmus students' collaborative study processes, their intercultural dialogue and the creation of a co-constructed artistic end product.

The research method used was a qualitative content analysis, with which specific themes from the data were identified. The data is based on the students' (e-)portfolios and their artistic end products as well as their video-recorded presentations. The research is part of a larger action research project. The structure of this chapter consists firstly of briefly presenting the intertextual method and model, then the data and the Erasmus students' analysis according to the collected categories, and lastly, the results and conclusions.

The intertextual method: constructing critical intercultural diversity competence

I will now briefly introduce the intertextual method, explaining the theoretical background to the model that is here applied in practice (see Table 1). The intertextual method (Paatela-Nieminen, 1996; 2000) applies the concepts of Gérard Genette (1997a; 1997b), Julia Kristeva (1984) and Deleuze and Guattari (1987). Genette's systematic linguistic approach helps to determine a text's relation to its context open-endedly (Genette, 1997a). To start with, a work (of art) under study is first seen as a source text, a *paratext*, that works as a threshold of open-ended questions for the reader (Genette, 1997a). The text itself tempts the reader to ask questions and in the search for answers the reader relates the text to its setting and context and her/himself personally.

Secondly, the text is open-endedly connected to other texts, for example a work (of art) is related to other works (of art). Genres work as tools for grouping texts that are similar to each other through some artistic, social, ideological or political relations (amongst others). In order to study the texts according to a uniting principle, they are arranged in a palimpsestical continuum, from the newest text to the oldest. Genette's palimpsestical reading, moving from the newest text to the oldest, is a way of producing transformations and variations from the textual continuum (1997b). A palimpsestical reading offers understanding as to how a newer text, the *hypertext*, transforms a preceding text, the *hypotext* (Genette 1997b). This is a way of re-writing transformations and variations from the continuum and understanding how a contemporary work of art (the hypertext) transforms, modifies, and recycles older art (the earlier hypotext) in a palimpsestical continuum. In this way, it is possible to produce interesting difference(s) from the continuum for further study.

Thirdly, Kristeva breaks up Genette's contextual and genre-based thinking. The difference is further studied in a space of plural sign systems with the result that diverse as well as new meanings are produced for it. Kristeva focuses on a subject in which personal drives, the unconscious and the collective cultural memory become part of the subject's reading process (Kristeva 1984). In a similar vein, a text has a logical structure and grammar, called the *phenotext*, and a dynamic unconscious force, the *genotext*, that produce meanings together (Kristeva 1984). Meanings are layered in the cultural memory and they are produced in the subjective reading process. According to Deleuze and Guattari (1987), the reading process can also be unstable and proceed with unexpected off-shoots. It depends on the reader as to which meanings s/he finds important to produce and develop further.

The aim of the intertextual method (Paatela-Nieminen, 1996; 2000), described briefly above (see Figure 1), is to offer a theoretical construction for producing and understanding the intertextual relations expanding through cultures, subjects and media and also for creating new meanings. The method has been applied as a step-by-step model (Paatela-Nieminen & Itkonen, 2017) in teacher education practice (see Table 1). In this model, the open-ended structure of textual relations between texts and culture are focused upon. The model has been developed in action research over several years and in many courses and it still continues to become more practical for a range of educational purposes.

Figure 1. Intertextual relations

Table 1. **An intertextual model for art education practise****A text's relations to its context (see paratext)**

- Take a curious approach and find yourself a visual text (work of art, image, place, object, etc.) that fascinates you.
- Explain in writing in the (e-)portfolio your personal enthusiasm for the chosen text.
- Look at the visual text as a starting point in order to identify the most interesting question about it. Then resolve your question by studying the subject matter using artistic and scientific sources. Write up your findings in the (e-)portfolio and document your study process.

Palimpsestical relations between texts (see hypertext)

- Next, connect your own visual text to others by searching for related imagery (e.g. 3-5 images).
- Include visual texts from the same genre that have, for example, a common theme, topic, content, form or function according to a principle of importance to you. Or find texts that can be structured, classified, categorised or typified based on your own your interest.
- Include visual texts that have preferably been produced at different times and/or in other cultures.
- Sort the visual texts into a palimpsestic continuum from the newest to the oldest.
- Study the visual continuum to identify traces of sameness (imitations, repetitions) and differences (variations, transformations) in order to reveal the most interesting detail. Write about your discovery and document your process.

Cultural relations within a space of plural meanings (see genotext, phenotext and rhizome)

- Continue to study the most interesting detail by making a break with the existing visual conventions of the genre and freely exploring the difference in relation to wider cultural sign systems (e.g. advertisements, art, literature, theatre, music) and/or cultural, linguistic, religious and philosophical networks
- Let your feelings, drives, unconscious, associations and rhizomatic off-shoots take part in your subjective remembering process.
- Study the detail open-endedly as a space of varied meanings in order to produce cultural diversity.
- Utilize artistic and scientific sources when documenting your process.

The intertextual production of a new work of art

- Exploit existing works of art and imagery of the visual culture from your intertextual study process to develop new meanings by transforming the form, media and/or content of a work of art/image thematically, quantitatively, stylistically and/or by changing the mood.

- Produce a new meaning for a work of art/image by blending and remixing parts of existing visual imagery with the new ideas and/or recycling parts of art works from different periods and/or media into new combinations.
 - and/or
- Create new meanings for the existing works of art and imagery by transforming the functions of styles (e.g. cubism, expressionism) and/or moods (humorous, satirical, serious, playful, ironic, polemical).
 - and/or
- Create an entirely new interpretation.
- Document the process and produce your artistic end product.

Critical dialogue

- Reflect on your own intertextual process, considering how the process of producing pluralities affected your thinking. Write down your reflections.
 - If you did group work, reflect on your intersubjective process, asking yourselves how you managed to produce intercultural understanding in your intersubjective and/or intermedial dialogue. Write down your reflections together.
-

The students

The Erasmus students formed two groups. The four students in group A came from Germany, Spain, Canada (currently an exchange student at a Spanish university) and The Netherlands. The three students in group B came from Austria and Germany. The data, and the study material, are based on the students' visual and written (e-)portfolios and their artistic end products as well as on their video-recorded presentations. Group A's e-portfolio was rich in personal writing and reflection (40 pages) and their artistic end product was a voice file. Group B gave a more formal PowerPoint presentation of their mutual process including their artistic end product, which was a series of 14 photos and a video. Both presentations were documented on video. Group A's presentation gave no new information in relation to their detailed (e-) portfolio, whereas group B's documented presentation complemented their portfolio. I chose to study Group A's exhaustive process and to take group B's more formal and condensed process descriptions into consideration in the results, although it would have been interesting to study how the intersubjective processes of these two groups had differed.

Analysis

The research method was qualitative content analysis in which the aim is to find specific themes in the data. The data was collected with the guiding categories developed from the intertextual method: a paratext's relations, its palimpsestic relations, and its cultural relations. These and the artistic production are described below and the reflection is included in the results. The students' written and spoken (video recordings) experiences were located within these categories and a detailed synthesis arising from their experiences was written up. The students' names have been changed.

A text's relations: a work of art is related to its context

In accordance with the intertextual method, the Erasmus students started by getting to know Finnish art during their stay in Finland. To create a personal and contextual relation to works of arts, the students first visited *Kiasma Museum of Contemporary Art* in Helsinki to choose a Finnish contemporary work of art that they found personally meaningful. The students were initially surprised when visiting Kiasma, and their immediate impressions were of bewilderment and perplexity. This was expected because both the starting point, contemporary Finnish art, and the intertextual model were new to them. However, after getting to know the museum they started to feel more comfortable. The students noticed that the works of art had an impact on each of them differently. They then decided to study a work of art as a text that touched them in a particular way and prompted them to ask several questions and seek answers. After the experience, recalling memories and feeling various emotions the students studied the works of art as texts that act as a threshold for producing interesting question(s) arising from the text itself (Genette, 1997a; Paatela-Nieminen, 1996; 2000).

In what follows, parts of the students' paratextual (Genette, 1997a) processes are presented. Zoe and Heike chose to study works of art as texts that contradicted their personal ways of thinking. Zoe's choice was *Roskavideo, Rubbish Video* (2014) by Janne Nabb & Maria Teeri, because it inspired her to question and change her thinking habits: *"When we were younger we were taught that when we were finished with something, we would immediately throw it away and forget about it - all because that's what was told to us by our elders."* However, *Rubbish Video* raised the question about using rubbish for creating something new. Zoe started to relate the video to its local context: *"Maybe it is also some form of recycling movement because as we know and have experienced, there is a lot of consciousness towards reducing, reusing and recycling here."* To find answers, she studied recycling in relation to Finnish culture. Heike, for her part, studied Jenni Hiltunen's work, *Grind* (2011), a four-minute video projection of Jamaican dance. This video appeared to be in total conflict with her own German cultural background and previously learnt ways of interpreting art correctly. However, Heike was able to go beyond the learned cultural ways of seeing stereotypes to construct her cultural identity: *"I'm from Germany and there Jamaican dancehall queen dancing is mostly just viewed as something really vulgar, obscene and sexual that women do in discotheques and clubs. People who dance that way are often times being looked at by others and people talk bad about them and judge them, just based on their style of dancing."* Heike started to question the stereotypes and prejudices that her society had earlier taught her. Her question was related to the bewilderment of realising that people can see a dance style in different ways: *"As I watched the performance and simultaneously read those articles and heard people bad-mouthing the dance style, the impression got stuck in my head, in my friends' heads and in the heads of many other people worldwide that the twerking style must be something obscene and vulgar, something 'good girls' don't do."* To understand this issue further she related the dance to its context, its Jamaican roots, and studied the history of twerking.

Wilma and Marta experienced their works of art through the senses. Wilma studied Jaakko Niemelä's work, *Usko, Faith* (2006-2015), an installation of a room with a collapsed ceiling, which affected Wilma physically: *"For me this piece of art started to symbolize this breaking free of something boring or something too regulated. I sense this urge or necessity for the ceiling to collapse, because that way, finally, new light can come in."* Wilma's question about *Faith* dealt with Dutch culture and breaking Dutch cultural habits: *"This art piece reminds me of this tendency in my culture, and how it feels to get only a little bit of freedom, even though there is a world that you can imagine where even more freedom would be possible. There is freedom, but socially there is still this unspoken frame in which one should behave. I personally believe that this tendency in my culture can be really problematic for the people that live in it."* Marta studied Kaarina Haka's piece, *Nimetön, Nameless* (2016), an installation

falling between painting and sculpture: “*Personally I think that art works from emotions and impulses. Pieces of paper that get goose bumps. Colours capable of making us feel in different ways.*” Marta’s question concerned Haka’s work of art, which seduces the viewers’ senses and offers materials that transmit warmth, peace, tranquillity and innocence. Marta studied these emotional and visual factors from the basis of colour theory and proceeded from there to Western ways of seeing space.

All the students managed to find a work of art that interested them personally and asked a question about it. By studying the answers that came from various sources and references, the students contextualised their works of art in Finnish and Jamaican cultural settings to which they further related their own cultural identity. Zoe, Heike and Wilma critically questioned their local cultural preconceptions in their intercultural learning process. Marta’s process raised an aesthetic question within the context of Western art.

The palimpsestical relations between texts: a work of art is related to other works of art

The Erasmus students continued their intercultural study, but at this point the students started to work together, intersubjectively. However, it is not always easy to accept another view even though the other does not always mean something external or outside oneself but may be an internal part of each of us. According to Kristeva (1991; 1993b), a foreigner lives within us and exists in a hidden part of our identity. When we recognize the foreigner within ourselves, we might be able to overcome hatred or fear of the other. The students’ dialogue was not always smooth: “*It was like we hadn’t developed a language to talk about art together yet*”. The students started to share their subjective experiences with each other and agreed that they needed a mutual theme, a guiding principle of interest. They debated whether they would find something in common in all of their experiences despite their different choices of texts. They managed to construct their intersubjective group identity by discovering similarities in their experiences. They had all studied individuality and something that they thought was not commonly accepted or decent, such as making art out of rubbish, twerking, being between rules and freedom, and pondering in-between a sculpture or a painting. Their principle became agency: “*By ‘agency’ we mean the free will one has to act, think and be however they please, no matter what has been previously spelled out for them.*” They started to create a palimpsestic continuum from a genre of works of art that they thought depicted agency (Genette, 1997b; Paatela-Nieminen, 1996; 2000).

The students studied Finnish works of art found in three Finnish art museums: *Kiasma Museum of Contemporary Art*, the *Ateneum Art Museum* that includes the main collection of Finnish art and the *Sinebrychoff Art Museum* of old European art. They studied the texts palimpsestically, from the newest to the oldest, to ascertain transformations from the continuum in order to produce differences. Instead of using their own original choices, the students chose a new text from Kiasma, *Emerging Thoughts*, by Anna Estarriola (2015), which consists of a big grey beanie with 60 different heads inside it. According to the students, art and thought are subjective and represent one’s own individual experience of free will. For them, the heads in Estarriola’s work represented the emotions and feelings that one experiences and which are influenced by the community or by the individuals that surround them. The students linked individual agency to Helge Dahlman’s work of art, *War* (1946-1948), in the Ateneum Art Museum. Although the students connected this work of art with Finnish wars and shortage of goods, it also envisioned for them a brighter future and growing agency. Then the students visited the Sinebrychoff Art Museum and found a painting entitled *Greeks Entering Troy*, by Giovanni Domenico Tiepolo (1770s). This painting depicts the ancient Greek myth about the

Trojan horse and it showed the students: *“How even though we act how we want, we don't always get the outcome we want.”*

After getting to know the Finnish art scene, the students focused on their individual cultures, each student looking for two texts from their home countries (Canada, Germany, The Netherlands and Spain) this time with the guiding principle of agency in mind. Each student selected two texts from their own home country and discussed them together. They produced a palimpsestic image continuum, from the newest to the oldest, where they included all the works of art that they had studied interculturally. They discussed and produced a difference from the continuum. In Todd McLellan's photograph, *Things Come Apart - Wind Up Clock* (2011-2013), Zoe saw a society in which people are constantly rushing against time and have everything scheduled down to the minute: *“The hands of the clock can represent society and its expectations to get things done when they dictate it. They lead and control our thoughts and emotions. The breaking of the wind-up clock represents going against society's standards of time. It represents freedom and breaking free, agency, that signifies doing whatever one wants ignoring what is expected/spelled out for everyone to do.”* On the other hand, *18 Minutes* (a 3-minute video installation), by Adad Hannah (2010) restricts agency. The student saw a person acting against her/his will but, at the same time, the picture represents an action that was not expected of her/him or of others: *“In life, sometimes we want the same things but for different reasons and in order to achieve these things you must go through some steps to accomplish it. For this to happen, only you can assert your own agency. What you do is your decision alone, no matter previous thoughts or warnings.”*

Heike chose *Der arme Poet, The Poor Poet* by the German artist Carl Spitzweg (1839). According to Heike, the poet barely earns a living with his art of writing, studying and philosophy. Despite his poor living conditions, he continues working: *“It is his free will, his agency, to act that way, to do what he personally loves. Society, especially the German society of today would tell him to get a job, make money and stop living in a dream world. The poor poet doesn't let society's value system determine his way of life though. He chooses for himself and faces the consequences stoically.”* Hermine Oberück's work, *Alltag von Menschen mit geistigen Behinderungen, Unreasonable, Everyday Life of People with Intellectual Disabilities* (1988), is a photo of a girl with Down Syndrome. Heike thinks that Oberück shows agency in defining beauty in many different ways, for example, by taking pictures of the overlooked and ignored. She thought that having a disability does not mean being ugly or segregated from the rest of society: *“The girl in the photo looks confident, happy and content with herself and to me personally she is beautiful, her smile is captivating and her face is glowing. My agency, my free will, is to find her beautiful, whether society's standards agree or not.”*

De aardappeleters, The Potato Eaters by the Dutch artist Vincent van Gogh (1885) has always been present in Wilma's life in the Netherlands. Due to this it was hard for her to look at the painting with new eyes: *“I couldn't manage to really look at it, instead it was like a cliché of my town. Now I will look at it again, through the principle of agency. I never liked this painting, because I felt like it depicted the people of our town like animals almost. Something to be viewed, but something quite far away from the viewer. I wonder how these people themselves might have viewed this painting at the time. Were they happy to see themselves this way? Did they have a choice in the way they were depicted? I don't think so. In that way they might not have agency in that moment.”* The artist and engineer, Theo Jansen, developed a series of kinetic sculptures since the 1990s, called *Strandbeest: Animaris Apodiacula, Beach Beasts* (2012-2013). Using wind power, the Beach Beasts can 'walk': *“When looking at the Strandbeest, I feel a similar kind of excitement as when I meet an animal in the forest. It's uncanny how much they seem like animals or insects maybe. Some of them seem dangerous, I*

feel the urge to run from them. Others endear me, I might say I find them 'cute'. I think this is all a result of Jansen's effort to create animals that live without his assistance. Sometimes he describes himself as God, the creator of new species, and his animals as ones that evolve over time. This idea to me is very interesting in light of our theme agency. In a very straightforward way it could be said that the sculptures 'seem' to have agency, they have mechanisms that work on wind energy. And so, even if the artist or no one for that matter is present, they might move around. However, as an experiment 25 years in the making, one can see that Jansen's goal is not to create sculptures that can move with the use of wind energy. His goal is to create life. Life that has agency per definition, and that can choose when to actually go to the beach and when not."

Marta chose two Spanish cultural icons, Salvador Dali's *Persistence of Memory* (1931) and Picasso's *Guernica* (1937). These depict agency in two ways: *"Just as time isn't deterministic and rigid, our perception also has its own agency. When I see this I feel there is no time, there are no rules. The painting has its own 'agency'."*

The students noticed that the palimpsestic continuum showed a relation between their different depictions of free will, agencies and the use of similar topics at different periods. They also discovered several transformations and variations in the visual continuum of agency, such as the use of different media: painting, sculpture, installation, video, photography and the use of lighting. The students continued to discuss and produce the most interesting difference that they had found in the continuum which was beauty.

Cultural relations: a space of plural meanings

The students drew out beauty as the most interesting difference in the palimpsestic continuum. They produced an intercultural space for their intercultural dialogue on beauty, with its different meanings in different sign systems. According to the students, there is beauty in art, but the way that beauty is visualised varies within the different texts. They gave examples of different visualisations of beauty. The work *Unreasonable - Everyday Life of People with Intellectual Disabilities*, portrays beauty in the main character, who was photographed as a shining person without disabilities. In *Rubbish Video*, beauty is being created out of trash, and in the installation, *Faith*, beauty is derived from a broken ceiling. The students agreed that beauty is plural because is eternally subjective and dependent on the viewer.

The intertextual way of studying art history opens works of art to cultural connections. The students discussed the standards of beauty that depend on times and cultures. These standards influence culture as a whole and the students thought that they tended to be more traditional and that societies are often guided by them: *"The evolution of beauty throughout the ages has also impacted society in how we all act in one way or another. It feels as if we are letting voices dictate what beauty is and how it should be and as a result we tend to ignore and not acknowledge the beautiful things we possess because we are constantly comparing ourselves to what society has marked out for us."* The students also discussed the different standards of beauty in their own countries and related themselves to photos of persons who are considered to be beautiful people: Rachel McAdams, Penélope Cruz, Doutzen Kroes and Claudia Schiffer – and these were placed next to pictures of themselves: *"We could see from the 'beautiful' people that we selected, that there are similarities between them, and we discussed how beauty standards are nowadays possibly becoming more global."* Indeed, according to Kristeva, global cultural logic flattens the complexity of subjects (2000, p. 13).

The students' intersubjective dialogue was challenging because talking and writing about art need practice. It is laborious and difficult to translate one's visual and emotional

experiences into words especially when art vocabulary in general is not familiar, which is often the case with teacher and kindergarten students. Also, the students' skills in using English varied considerably. It was one student's mother tongue while the others were using it as their second language with varying levels of fluency. However, the intercultural dialogue was a meaningful process for finding personal interests: *"The individual combined with the group process really enabled me to reflect in many new meaningful ways. Then we started our tentative process of working together, and then alone again, and having to check back in with each other each time, just to see if we were still following one another. Many times we were not following each other of course. I wouldn't say that this was mostly because of cultural differences, but really also just because of personal differences and the fact that all of us were really unfamiliar with this type of process. Slowly we started to be able to talk more together, and I personally really found my interest."*

The intercultural process was also an important way *"to get to know one's own culture further, while exploring Finnish culture and each other's cultures. It has been really interesting and rewarding to work in a multicultural team. Everyone has been able to share art from their respective home countries."*

The students' artistic end products

The intertextual process helped the students to create new ideas artistically. The students were fascinated by beauty and the question of how to relate themselves to it in real life. They discovered that some of them had low self-esteem that caused them difficulties in considering themselves beautiful, while others thought that saying 'I'm beautiful' was arrogant. In their dialogue, they decided to contest and transform their ideas about beauty: *"People often say that beauty is in the eye of the beholder, and I say that the most liberating thing about beauty is realizing you are the beholder."* For their artistic end products the students created an audio file of their changing thought processes concerning their own beauty. The file starts with negative thoughts, such as *"I don't like the colour of my eyes"* and *"That dress looks so much better on her"*. Then the file proceeds to present more neutral ideas, such as *"There are different types of bodies, this one is mine"* and *"These are my eyes. Look at them"*. The file continues with positive ideas, such as *"Today I feel amazing"* and *"I love myself"*.

The students' end product created an intertextual relation to the work of art by Anna Estarriola *Emerging Thoughts* by transforming the artist's idea and presenting it in different media. Intertextual reading shows how ideas are recycled interculturally and intermedially. The students' voices are heard in an audio file which sounds like a stream of consciousness, in which their various voices represent the collective cultural memory of women and their struggle to find a relation to their beauty. Their process also depicts how they (we all) are influenced by the negative, neutral and/or positive thoughts of others. The students produced a new idea for agency, in that their perception of their beauty is not just their own, but shared in the collective cultural space/memory. In accordance with Kristeva, it can be seen that the students' practice of intertextual dialogue reshaped their subjectivity and identity as it was formed in and through art (Lechte, 1990, p. 53).

Results

Critical intercultural competence is understood here as an ongoing learning process that takes place in a dialogue and produces self-expression. It focuses on understanding and respecting intercultural diversities as well as producing new ideas. The intertextual method

provides an open-ended structure for comprehending textual transformations and creating new meanings. Dialogue is both the subject's reading-writing process and an infinity of possibilities of signs at the same time.

In this case, the intertextual model offered the students a new way to study art history interculturally, starting from contemporary art to old art and art history. With the model, the students learned more about their personal choice of contemporary art work through their questions that situated the art piece in its cultural context (text's relations). In this way, they substantiated their intellectual curiosity and motivation for learning to learn. They also produced an image continuum of similar texts based on their theme, agency (texts' relations). When reading palimpsestically, they could trace transformations and see how a newer work of art varied and transformed the older ones. These traces show how times and cultures vary, transform and recycle meanings. The students also managed to produce a difference, that of beauty, from the visual continuum. When the students examined the difference in an intercultural space, they realized that beauty could be understood interculturally in different sign systems and in diverse ways (cultural relations). This in turn created understanding of how plural meanings exist in different times and cultures. The students' artistic end products illustrated how the intertextual study process helped them to create their new ideas artistically.

Criticality is embedded in the intertextual study process itself. The intertextual process is challenging, however, and demands the interest and motivation to question, find out, analyse, assess and produce meanings and create new solutions. The learning process depends on the students' will and motivation to produce knowledge and learning to learn. The process may remain vague or it may strengthen deficit beliefs if the study process is not profound enough for the individual mind but simply repeats familiar ideas. A curious and open attitude is needed for the intertextual dialogue, and this requires bearing uncertainty, as the process is open-ended and the individual is in the process of growth. At its best, the process is like an adventure that proceeds through ideas not known before.

The students developed their critical intercultural competence in cooperation with others. The intertextual dialogue is a multifaceted intersubjective learning process. The beginning of the investigation process is often slow because it takes time to develop an interesting subject and discuss it with others. However, once the idea is found, the process usually proceeds and at best the students become interested in their own learning. They produced their artistic (e-)portfolio and outcome together. However, dialogue is further challenging because it is sometimes difficult to translate one's visual and emotional experiences into art language in English, which was a second language for most. These issues made their dialogue sometimes perplexing.

The students' cultural identities were challenged in their intersubjective dialogue when they critically questioned their assumptions and cultural habits of understanding while producing plural interpretations. They mentioned that it is important to appreciate different values, for example, when they discussed their own and intersubjective views about agency. They stressed how they had to remember to respect others' agency as they realised how diverse interpretations are. The intertextual dialogue seemed to encourage tolerance, for example, when they realized that even though they all came from different cultures, they could find a connecting idea in any art piece.

According to the students' presentations, (e-)portfolios and creative outcomes, the Erasmus students in both groups succeeded in creating an interesting intersubjective process and outcome. Their intercultural process combined Finnish art and art from their own countries.

While remixing local art from Kiasma to global beauty icons they produced a new glocal hybrid for their end products. The local art they discussed also created a space for understanding the intersubjective theme of beauty in plural ways. Beauty was experienced personally and it revealed to them the collective cultural memory of the plural meanings of beauty.

Conclusions

The intertextual way of studying art history is new in the context of exchange student teachers. However, offering the students an authentic experience of intersubjectively studying contemporary and other works of art in the art museums seemed to work well. They also managed to apply the intertextual model to studying the relations between works of art, creating an intersubjective study process and co-constructing an artistic end product. The reading process is a holistic experience because it includes logical thinking while simultaneously following the unconscious logic of dreams, in a sensory and bodily way. However, all these issues are challenging and success primarily depends on the students themselves and their artistic learning process.

The intertextual model provides a structure for open-ended learning but it is not a recipe. In this case, it seemed to help stellar students to get involved in their study process. However, not all students were interested in open-ended processes. This gave me the idea that I would next develop different examples of intertextual processes for those students who find open-ended learning too laborious.

Depending on the task and the target group, studying art history intertextually has the potential to become a profound (paratext & hypertext) and culturally vast (genotext & phenotext) dialogue. As the method is subjective, one may in the best case become motivated by learning to learn. However, intersubjective learning needs negotiation because the process should be equal for all participants. The intersubjective process encourages plural voices and may thus succeed with diverse children. However, the target group defines the open-endedness of the process. With the help of my colleagues, I have tried this method of teaching art history to pre-schoolers in a museum and high school students in their art classes. In both cases, the pre-schoolers/students have been encouraged to study texts open-endedly although the number of texts has been restricted, for example, by limiting the number of works of art.

It is important for the occupation of future teachers to understand diversity. I think that these future teachers got to know how art and cultural forms travel intertextually in-between different cultures and the process changes them. They also realised how differently we all think about the same texts.

Although the intertextual method has originally been developed for research in the fields of arts, art education, visual culture and image studies, it may also have potential in other areas. I would also recommend the use of the intertextual model for teaching practice in art education as well as in other fields where it is important to study and produce plural meanings as well as to create new ones.

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