Educating Responsible Citizens. Intercultural Competence and Aesthetic Education

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Abstract: What is aesthetic education good for in pedagogical regards and how can this be compared with the competencies that intercultural education aims at? Our main argument in the article is that the core of intercultural competencies consists of a number of overlapping modes of knowledge, skills and capabilities such as active empathy, critical approach to hidden colonial and racial heritages, dialogic relationships with the world and the other, as well as openness to experiences that are radically different from one's own. We regard these skills, competencies and knowledge as main elements of "educating responsible citizens." The article is a joint product of researchers working within different disciplines and with different knowledge interests. They share an interest in the question of if and how aesthetic education can lead to the particular intercultural competence of educating responsible citizens.

Introduction: Arguments the for Arts as Tools in Intercultural Education:

In Sweden, intercultural education was first mentioned in a Swedish public inquiry 1983 (SOU1983, 57), which stated: "Intercultural education includes all children and all adults in the school – also outside the school" (43). In another public inquiry, intercultural pedagogy is considered a "natural foundation of all education", and here it is recommended that an intercultural perspective should permeate teacher education (17-18). Most recently, intercultural pedagogy is discussed in an anthology by Goldstein-Kyaga, Borgström and Hübinette (2012) where they characterize a vision of education as something "double"; partly as a profession, i.e. teaching, and partly as a discipline in the humanities and social sciences "specializing in cultural processes and human cultural conditions" (9). The authors suggest that the pedagogical aim is to study how different cultural phenomena can be seen as conditions for learning, socialization and development. Cultural differences can in this way be integrated into the educational settings and contribute to learning without falling into considerations based purely on ethnicity. However, intercultural education is on the one hand a matter of perspective rather than of profession; it is not sufficient to equip teachers with some professional skills to deal with pupils with non-European backgrounds. Rather, we need to shift perspective and see education in such a way that overcomes Eurocentrism and embraces European and non-European knowledge perspectives on an equal basis. On the other hand, there is a modern or cognitivist perspective, which tends to reduce knowledge to

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science and education to a scientific discipline. Through this mechanism, intercultural education remains an integral part of the current educational paradigm (Nejadmehr, 2012). As such, it disseminates Eurocentrism and contributes to the persistence of racism and colonialism as these oppressive phenomena are part and parcel Westerns heritages (Bernasconi & Lott, 2000; Gray, 2007; McCarthy, 2009; Mack, 2010). An education attuned to the multicultural environments of today's schools revisits its basic principles. This means a revision of the relationships between science and education, since science itself emerged and developed in tandem with Europe's colonial expansion and slavery (Nejadmehr, forthcoming). An increasing diversification challenges a conception of a society that is culturally homogeneous and thus, questions about interculturalism, human rights and citizenship become ever more urgent (Nejadmehr, 2012).

Communication through media other than verbal language is common in all cultures. Making pictures, dancing, singing etc. are part of various situations in everyday life; on special occasions and especially at various ceremonies and rituals. It involves forms of communication which in various ways complete verbal language and increase the possibility of human interaction in a wide sense. To reduce aesthetic modes of communication into something that is only about expression means that only one side of a complex interaction is illuminated. Communication with pictures has been in existence for far longer than the use of writing. And although no images are perceived equally and in a natural way by everyone everywhere, images and other aesthetic modes of expression overcome barriers for communication that verbal language sometimes represents. Therefore, the concept of arts used as tools in education is presented by the authors as a means to create intercultural competence. This contribution focuses on developing this hypothesis.

The Problem:

Lahdenperä & Sandström (2011) write about the ethnocentric view on school that is characterized by the history and ideologies of every country. Values and ideals for teaching and the prevailing view of knowledge have their origin in this ethnocentric view. Lahdenperä & Sandström argue that the Swedish school can be described as an ethno-nationalistic project which thus can also be considered from a nationalistic and mono-cultural perspective. This means that starting points for ideals and norms in teaching are based on the idea of national citizenship. The consequence of this is that multiculturalism is treated as an immigrant or minority problem that concerns only certain schools (Lahdenperä & Sandström 2011). The

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focus of teaching is then directed more towards an adaptation to mainstream society than to a learning culture that increases awareness of the different cultures' expressive ways, creating room for an equal communication with students about this (Lahdenperä & Sandström, 94; Stier & Sandström, 2009). It is in this context that aesthetic learning processes in the sense of exploring and problematizing processes are supposed to allow for democratic and creative dialogues in the classroom to promote intercultural interaction.

What are the pedagogical ideas about intercultural competence and aesthetic education, and what is the relation between the two? A possible way to approach this issue is the report *Learning: The Treasure Within* written by a team led by Jacques Delors under the auspices of The International Committee on Education for the twenty-first century for UNESCO. The report, published in 1996, foregrounds the role of life-long learning for peace, freedom and justice in a globalized world. Education is seen as fundamental both for individual and social development. Delors describes intercultural education as fundamental both for individual and social development. The report lists a number of problems that education is supposed to help overcome such as the tension between the global and the local, tradition and modernity.

Paraphrasing Simmel's concept of the tragedy of culture (Simmel 1964), there is an increasing knowledge gap due to the rapid expansion of knowledge and a declining ability of the individual to become knowledgeable in all intellectual realms. There is also, as Habermas (1968) indicates, an increasing gap between different knowledge interests (technological control, social critique and humanistic understanding) in a rapidly changing world. This poses a great challenge for the education of the future.

Intercultural education is a practical tool. The report suggests that:

> There is … every reason to place emphasis on the moral and cultural dimensions
> of education, enabling each person to grasp the individuality of other people and to
> understand the world's erratic progression towards a certain unity; but this progress
> must begin with self-understanding through an inner voyage whose milestones
> are knowledge, mediation and the practice of self-criticism. (Delors 17)

What is important about the quotation is its emphasis on the dynamic nature of identities and social reality. It focuses on this reality being a shared one, where practices of self-criticism, recognition of other people's individuality and processes of social change are different dimensions of the same shared lifeworld. To live and act in such a lifeworld puts

ethical demand on anybody to attain the competencies necessary for interacting with others in an adequate way. Four pillars are held up to help support the idea of lifelong learning (also described as "a necessary utopia" by the commission). The first pillar is "*learning to live together*" which concerns developing an understanding of others, their history, traditions and values. The second pillar is "*learning to know*", the idea here being to create a broad, general education in order to make a person capable of going deeper into a number of subjects with creative curiosity and a longing for more knowledge. The third pillar is "*learning to do*". The aim here is to provide learning subjects with the competencies to cope with different, often unexpected situations and finding appropriate solutions by cooperating with others. The fourth and last pillar is "*learning to be*", which aims at personal competencies such as increasing autonomy, as well as educating judgment and the sense of personal responsibility, when seeking to accomplish and sustain the common good.

What this contribution suggests is that educational thinking or pedagogy should look at intercultural education not merely in terms of ethnic or national identities (or class, gender, sexual orientation etc.) as is often the case. By this, education would be reduced to sensitivity towards minorities, as well as to possible clashes between what is seen as "normal" and "deviant" (Becker 1962). Intercultural education is, much broader, rooted in the problem of knowledge (Vella 2008) rather than identity. Whereas identity tends to lead to closure (even the position of "transgender" excludes those who chose to define themselves as "men" or "women"), knowledge is inherently open in the sense that we can always learn more about ourselves and each other. The learning goal of intercultural education shall moreover profit from decentering the concept of identity to instead foreground the concept of knowledge (Searle 1996).

This reemphasis of the conceptual focus from identity to knowledge might help us to rethink the role of aesthetic education in an intercultural perspective. Changing the focus from identity to knowledge, transforms the problems of sensitivity and cultural clashes into a problem of intercultural competence, where both self-understanding and openness to perspectives other than one's own becomes the overall learning goal. In some sense learning become transcultural, as learning from each other contains elements from different cultures. To be competent in intercultural terms means to learn both how to understand our own Self better and at the same time aim at increasing our understanding of the Other. The two types of knowledge should not exclude but complement each other.

Our approach to intercultural education is participatory and practice-oriented, and it considers this kind of education as an empowering one. We ask the question of how the

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common efforts of the different educational stakeholders and actors can make such an education possible. We also recognize that there are real obstacles in the way of intercultural education such as implicit and explicit biases, structural racism and xenophobia. These obstacles are of different kinds and at different levels and demand different levels of engagement. However, they demand practical steps to identify tools to overcome them and make an intercultural education possible. Starting from a problem-solving state of mind, we carefully identify obstacles and analyze problems. Our efforts are then aimed at finding proper tools to remove obstacles in the way of solving the problems. Practically, such a process can go through different stages. Here, we focus on three interconnected main steps:

1) Tool-Designing Step

Following critical analyses of the problem at hand, this step is a constructive one, where tools are carefully designed. These tools can be conceptual, curricular, political, cultural, psychosocial, social, economic or a combination of a number of them. In a diagnostic analysis, the contemporary educational paradigm is problematized. Such a problematization aims at transforming the current educational paradigm in order to make it intercultural. Generally, during the last century, many subaltern knowledge perspectives like those of women, indigenous people, former colonies and the working class made enormous attempts to make their voices heard in education. Migration and digital communication have brought different cultures and peoples together in an increasingly globalized world. The narrow-mindedness of hegemonic knowledge and educational perspectives, racism and discriminatory power structures has also been revealed. It has also been demonstrated that the arts can in some cases prove to be a powerful tool for intercultural education. The hegemonic role of scientific knowledge has thus been questioned. In the next section, we will try to illustrate how the arts can be used as useable tools through which the obstacles in intercultural education's way can be removed.

The Arts as Tools for Intercultural Education

As one of the most important tools for the possibility of intercultural education, the arts can contribute to a general atmosphere of dialogue among different knowledge perspectives. By facilitating communication across cultures, the arts can encourage and enhance interculturality in education as well as in society in a sustainable way. Such a social climate facilitates interculturality and makes it easier to overcome prejudices like racism, discrimination and

xenophobia. Different literary and artistic expressions can combat implicit and explicit discriminatory prejudices and norms of daily life such as cultural stereotypes that function as impediments in the way of intercultural education. They can also have a positive influence on shaping self-confidence in marginalized people through facilitating intercultural encounters.

Intercultural encounters can take place in the world of everyday life and in the world of art and literature. Among the unique qualities of the arts is the ability to create time-spaces for critical thinking and reflection. Providing a critical distance as well as spaces for reflection, artistic and literary encounters can facilitate intercultural interchanges that face-to-face dialogues cannot. Artistic expressions can put into play the intercultural dialogues and encounters, the contextual and the transcendental; they are on the one hand cultural products and as such dependent on the specific contexts in which they are produced. On the other hand, they can easily go beyond their contexts of production into a context of dissemination and communication that is borderless; they can reach beyond cultural confines and connect people with different cultural backgrounds who might otherwise not participate in a dialogue with each other.

It should also be mentioned that works of art are ambivalent. They can contribute to creative meetings between people and to learning from each other, but they can also contribute to stereotyping and conflicts. We can thus design and communicate artistic expressions in such a way that they can work as tools to overcome the obstacles that stand in the way of intercultural education. One way to remove these obstacles is to go beyond the dominant Western canon and its normative aesthetic, and prepare the ground for different traditions to attain and express their own voices on their own conditions. Properly understood, art and art expressions can contribute to intercultural education by:

- re-structuring knowledge/power relations in order for education to be a way to empower marginalized groups and to make social mobility through education possible for any and all;
- re-thinking "the others", their communities and their knowledge perspectives and educational needs;
- re-thinking their empowerment and participatory roles in society as well as in educational policy making;
- understanding knowledge and education as dynamic, fluid, alive, transformative and as never fully finished;
- understanding the importance of being open to the unknown and not-yet-known;

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- shedding light on invisible prejudices and presumptions and helping teachers, students and people in general to suspend them and to listen to each other in nuanced ways;
- understanding cultures and identities as fluid, open, mobile and multiple.

Through these processes the arts can encourage aesthetic learning processes, offer spaces for voice-attaining or many-voicedness (Skidmore 2012) and bring forward stories that otherwise might remain unheard. It is our hypothesis that aesthetic education, precisely because aesthetic knowledge to a large degree defines itself as a constant dialogue between Self and Other (Cooley 1964), is well adapted to this particular learning goal (intercultural competence). But aesthetic knowledge (through education), as we know from history and contemporary societies, can easily be misused both for commercial and political purposes (Sturken & Cartwright 2001). Hence we also need to remain critical to aesthetic knowledge and its potentials, which is why intercultural competence through aesthetic education is not merely a cultural but also a moral issue. This calls for a more precise definition of aesthetic experience, dialogic imagination and empathy as tools in intercultural education.

Empathy through Art: A Tool for Intercultural Education

Art has the ability to create empathy, and enable participants to shift perspective and see the world from the perspective of the Other, a basic precondition for intercultural education. Although we think that different kinds of aesthetic experience may challenge stereotypes and attitudes, it has to be clear that this cannot be a simple process. The concept of empathy appears rather frequently in intercultural contexts. Still, there is not just one definition of empathy circulating, and there are different opinions about whether or not it's fruitful to use the concept at all when considering art reception. The kind of mental operation we mostly think of as crucial for empathy is to "put oneself in another's shoes". This phrase is used, for instance, when parents and teachers admonish children when they tease or bully each other. But although this is part of the development of empathy, it cannot be enough in order to experience the emotion, especially not in relation to a fictional character. Svenaeus (2011) states that empathy is grounded in the embodied feeling of pain, that is reflecting the pain of a living person in front of me. And I'm not feeling this pain after *thinking* that this person is suffering. Conversely, it precedes mere intellectual understanding of the other's situation. More is needed for a full-blown feeling of empathy. Yet, it is enough for us to understand that reading a novel will not be a sufficient context for empathy, at least defined in this way.

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Boler (1997) discusses empathy in connection to comic books and states the risk of simplification as a significant problem. Her critique of what she calls "passive empathy" is that this will allow people to identify with a character in an undisturbed and easy way. This can be a mode of reading, she says, that may permit people to abdicate responsibility. Although Boler admits that literature may promote an emotional reaction and even identification with the character, this will not motivate consequent reflection or action. Responsibility, thus, seems to be a critical issue when discussing empathy. The question is if responsibility of this kind can be extended to embrace categories other than human beings. Researcher R.D. Bradshaw (2016) documented an interesting research project which aimed to foster empathy in students by integrating visual art in the classroom. The students developed a kind of ecological literacy through a combination of art creation and interpretation (addressing environmental issues), discussion, and writing. When for instance discussing images of animals, the students realized that they themselves were actors in the food chain. They also experienced that they could give voice to the voiceless. In this way, the project exhibits a different and very creative manner of challenging students to think from perspectives different to their own. The overall learning goal of schools should hence be to foster precisely this type of open, active, and responsible type of empathy.

Aesthetic Learning Processes as a Tool for Intercultural Learning

The concept of aesthetic learning processes was introduced in Denmark in the 1990s (Lindström 2009) and established in Sweden through reports arguing for an integration of visual arts and other aesthetic activities such as dance, film, drama, etc. in the Swedish school curriculum. Swedish research (Amhag et al 2013; Häikiö 2007; Lindstrand & Selander 2008) in the field has been characterized by attempts to define aesthetic learning and a fairly comprehensive set of concepts have been developed (Hansson Stenhammar 2015). This new focus on aesthetic learning is part of a broader international reorientation of research focus from the practical aesthetic activities to strategies of thinking (Eisner 2002; Hetland &Winner 2007). This shift means an emphasis on thinking strategies that can be developed precisely through aesthetic learning processes aiming at increasing the capacity for a dialogical imagination.

The thinking strategies are expressed through action and a dialogue that is focused on creative thinking, innovation and reflection (Cox 2007). The main motivation of this research is to demonstrate the arts' value in relation to innovation (Hansson Stenhammar 2015). The

international research field on aesthetic learning processes can be divided into four major research themes: a) the place of art in education, b) critique of how Western colonial and imperialist perspectives have been applied to non-Western cultures, and how this has affected non-Western education, c) how far arts education has been adapted to the utilitarian educational philosophies, and d) gender perspectives on how normative power structures affect educational programs (Cox 2007).

Generally, learning and knowledge have a strong relationship to each other. It is difficult to speak of learning without touching knowledge as an effect of learning. The educational scientific discussion often focuses, from a hierarchical perspective, on this relationship between learning and knowledge: *process* and *product.* Learning involves many different complicated and complex processes. The complexity of aesthetic learning processes is made visible, *inter alia*, by the abundant conceptual apparatus that also describes this particular form of learning (Lindström, 2009). In relation to an intercultural perspective on learning, it is important to discuss and highlight the character of the aesthetic learning process as described by Hetland & Winner (2007) in which the formation of thinking is central. Based on this definition, we cannot connect the aesthetic learning processes solely to the aesthetic subjects. In order to promote intercultural learning, it is important that it is also understood as a general didactic method that has its roots in an artistic creative process. Intercultural learning cannot be limited only to certain classes or linked to certain subjects in the same way that aesthetic learning processes cannot be connected solely to the aesthetic field.

Seen from a transformative learning perspective, aesthetic education becomes interesting, because such education in itself aims at broadening our imagination, enabling us to see the world as a constant dialogue between the Self and the Other. This aspect of aesthetic learning has been emphasized by Bakhtin as dialogical imagination (Bakhtin 1980; Holquist 1992). Bakhtin's concerns have played a large role in re-defining what goes on in the classroom (Dysthe 1995; 2003), but it has also changed the view of the aesthetic subjects. Both these developments have made aesthetic learning processes more relevant for intercultural education.

The creation of meaning is a fundamental factor in all human relationships where communication occurs and requires mutual responsibility for understanding to be possible. There must be a willingness to take in the values and feelings of others, but also a willingness to listen (Bakhtin, 1981, 1993). The aesthetic learning process enables such a development through its investigative nature where dialogism, re-examination and transformation are the central bases for learning. These processes are also about being able to see outside oneself, and critically examine and reflect on culture in the sense of multiplicity of perspectives and voices.

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Each voice has its own words, but they interact with others (Bakhtin, 1981). This also applies to contemporary art as an object and as a tool for learning where the work itself can be understood as a double-voiced art (Evans, 2009).

2) How to Overcome Obstacles Standing in the Way of Intercultural Education?

In the previous section, we showed how different tools for making intercultural education possible can be designed. In this section, we focus on how these tools can practically be used. In this step, the tools are to be connected to obstacles that stand in the way of intercultural education. By designing tools, identifying obstacles and connecting them to each other, our efforts are aimed at using tools effectually and removing obstacles. For instance, implicit biases are an obstacle in the way of intercultural education. The tool that we have designed to remove this obstacle is transformative learning. By connecting transformative learning to implicit biases, we reveal them and can accordingly remove them from the path of intercultural education. The following section takes on this challenge.

Transformative Learning and Paradigm Shifts

To become interculturally competent, we need to counteract our implicit and explicit prejudices that impede intercultural education. As suggested above, the pedagogical aim of educating responsible citizens is a very complex one that is constantly open to new understandings. One of the issues that need to be dealt with is the hidden relation of power both in the classroom and in the national curriculum.

   Current attempts to define intercultural competence seem to fit the idea that the overall aim or learning goal of intercultural education should be an education that encourages an active, open and responsible pedagogy that also includes the development of empathy as part of understanding others. This calls for different types of educational practices, among which the concept of transformative learning is suggested. The concept was developed by Mezirow (2000), who defined the standpoint from critical theory and developmental psychology as a continuation of Bruner's theories (5). Mezirow states that transformative learning "refers to the process by which we transform our taken-for-granted frames of reference (meaning perspectives, habits of mind, mind-sets) to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, emotionally capable of change, and reflective so that they may generate beliefs and opinions

that will prove more true or justified to guide action" (2000, 7-8). He explains that transformative learning has to do with the insight that is gained from experiencing other perspectives, and that can guide further actions based on "participation in constructive discourse" where the experience of others has an impact (2000, 7-8).

Mezirow's definition of transformative learning has aspired other scholars to re-define what the concept stands for in a renewed context, for instance in relation to visual art education. For example, Cronqvist (2015) argues that transformative learning is about how to transform the common assumptions and frames of reference of knowledge and learning into part of the artistic development of visual art educational students. Karlsson Häikiö (2017) describes how transformative learning can be used as a pedagogical tool in creative activities in preschool and how it can be part of a constant changing of reference frames in the development of the professional skills of teachers in their everyday work with visual and digital tools. Wallin Wictorin (2014, 2015) has shown how transformative learning contributes to increased intercultural awareness, focusing on how comics can be used as an educational medium for children and youngsters to recognize both similarities and differences between different cultures and to learn about other ways of living.

A widened perception of the visual is a substantial part of a larger change of perspectives from a modern to a postmodern society in our Western cultural sphere. The visual field includes both learning (education) as visual art, and art as part of the expanded concept of visual culture (Mirzoeff, 1998). A visually oriented pedagogical practice, embraces a widened concept of visual culture and definitions of the visual world, ways of seeing, visual positioning etc., and can be used in acquiring knowledge with new methods, because visual methods are today commonly used within different research fields (Berger, 1972; Illeris, 2009; Pink, 2009; Rose, 2012). The issues that today are central to visual art education related to art-based practice, are inspired by different philosophical and theoretical perspectives, such as critical and poststructuralist approaches, as well as ethical and political ideals that relate to, for instance feminism, ecology, intercultural pedagogics, sustainability and post-colonialism.

The interpretation process that takes place in every meeting between the Self and the Other is intensified in the classroom. The interaction between teacher and student is traditionally characterized by a pragmatic purpose of transferring a common cultural heritage, which combines human knowledge about the world and the nature of aesthetic/cultural values, as well as basic norms and values for human interaction. Paradigm shifts and new philosophical approaches to education have presented more non-hierarchical views on learning concerning views of acquiring visual knowledge that are in their turn a part of a

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major change in qualitative scientific production in general, which also applies to changes in views on visual knowledge production. A traditional school context is guided by certain beliefs that frame and restrict freedom of thought through 'truth regimes', where meanings are prescribed, limiting opportunities for knowledge acquisition outside the norm (Atkinson, 2015, 49; Deleuze 2004). Atkinson (2015) has – besides seeing art as an empowering force in education – set different teaching positions against each other: an educational context where everything is already known (pedagogics of the known) and where knowledge is based on substances that are predetermined, controlled and measurable, an educational position where the learning process is dependent on dialogue and open processes in the educational situation, and an explorative approach to knowledge acquisition based on that which is not yet known (pedagogics of the not-known). Through more dialogic teaching positions, a non-hierarchical learning situation is created, leading to new structures of learning and teaching and knowledge production.

Multimodality, Intermediality and Mediated Languages

A common denominator for aesthetic learning processes is that they are characterized as reflective, exploratory and creative, including both logical and intuitive thinking as well as the aesthetic activity itself where the creative process is a central feature. Previous studies in education show that art is mainly discussed and legitimized on the basis of its existential value and its possible transfer effects, and that art can foster academic achievement in subjects other than the aesthetic (Winner et al. 2013). This is also noticeable in the various discourses that legitimize aesthetic learning in the Swedish municipal school and in teacher training (Saar, 2005; Lindgren 2006; Ericsson & Lindgren 2013).

But this is now changing, as aesthetic learning processes are attributed with a new meaning in school and teacher education, as the discourse *aesthetic activity as communicative competence* (Ericsson & Lindgren 2013) can be understood as an overall construction of legitimacy for aesthetic learning in school and teacher education. Within this discourse, the focus on artisanal skills in different aesthetic forms of expression has shifted to a focus on art's communicative elements. Here, multimodal mediation is central and visual competence is legitimized in relation to the needs defined by a media technological society (Ericsson & Lindgren 2013, 17). Attempts to characterize the aesthetic subjects and aesthetic learning processes are vast. Research has shown that the communicative competence which here is seen as synonymous with aesthetic learning cannot be automatically linked to reflexive and

problematizing learning processes but more to aims related to aesthetics and creativity by using various expressions in order to achieve visual or auditory effects (Winner et al. 2013).

Among the concepts which have emerged to frame and clarify what a dialogical imagination would mean in practice, are the concepts multimodality or multiliteracies (Cope & Kalantzis 2015). The former concept, which has been most used (Kress et. al. 2001; Kress & van Leeuwen 2006), can be seen as an attempt to overcome "textbound" limitations of English language studies. This led to an increasing interest in "the role of image, gesture, gaze and posture – in other words, multimodality" (Jewitt, 2011, 1) or the different representations of communication. By using various media in the production of stories and narrative practices with words and pictures, various horizons of understanding could be created that are related to a more diverse and complex understanding of our world (Wallin Wictorin 2015).

Kupferberg (2014) states that the increasing 'medialization' in society cannot be separated from the tools the different media are bound to from a material perspective and thus, all tools for communication can be seen as cultural and mediating tools that are in an interdependent relationship to each other. Kress and van Leeuwen's (2001) definition of multimodality is when a mixture of character systems and different representation systems, such as visual and written language, among others, are used together. In multimodality or intermodality, a starting point is the assumption that different communicative forms co-exist simultaneously. Multimodality is defined as a simultaneous communication between different semiotic resources (Selander & Kress 2010; Kress 2009/2011) or when different communicative forms or sign systems interact, as for instance words and images, or sound and light, in an expression or to create significance and meaning. From a cultural semiotic perspective, modalities are meaning-creating resources that are constituted culturally (Kress, 2009/2011 p. 54-57). Marner and Örtegren (2013) are critical of this concept of multimodality and want instead to describe a phenomenon where "different media types such as writing, image, sound are present in one and the same text", intermodality here referring to the relationship between different *"modes"* (qtd. in Stam 2015, 32).

In a multimodal understanding of language, aesthetic forms of expression as mediating communicative forms of learning (Amhag et.al. 2013) can also be regarded as language (Hansson Stenhammar, 2015). In the inclusion of various mediations, as well as in the understanding of language, thinking may also be included in the sense that people's thinking takes on creative expression in modes such as facial expressions, body gesticulation, and besides the use of the spoken and written word, the act of listening (Bakhtin 1981), as well as aesthetic semiotics (Hansson Stenhammar 2015). In this sense we also can speak of thinking

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as action, based on Vygotsky's (1978, 1934/2007) theories about the relationship between thinking and language. In this regard, knowledge of intercultural communication becomes a central aspect of the teacher's action competence of intercultural didactics and intercultural awareness.

3) Intercultural Education as Empowerment

In the first section, we designed and introduced some tools for the removal of obstacles in the way of intercultural education discussed in the second step. Aesthetic learning and transformative learning were among them. These tools were connected to obstacles like implicit biases. As result of the preceding two steps, the third step becomes an enabling one, where the educated become interculturally competent. They not only act ethically in their relationships with each other (taking into consideration their knowledge perspectives and educational needs), but are also skilled enough to design and use tools that remove the obstacles that stand in the way of intercultural patterns of action. A proper way to grasp the complicated intercultural competencies is to, following Wittgenstein (1958), see it through the notion of family resemblance. Intercultural competencies then become a group of skills and competencies related to each other through overlapping similarities, instead of sharing an eternal essence to be discovered and applied to any context. There are characteristics that can be added or deleted depending on the context of application. Mutual empathy, openness to others, recognition of uniqueness of other people are among these characteristics.

At this level, marginalized social groups like ethnic minorities attain their own voice and we use the enabling conditions of intercultural dialogue, for instance, as part of classroom practice. To have a *voice* is to have self-confidence, self-esteem and the capacity to freely develop and express one's interest in the public and educational settings. The public sphere as a space of togetherness is a space signified by power relations, where different voices can compete at making valid their perspective, their knowledge and interests (Schmidt, 2011). Voice-attaining activities are acts of empowerment that enable people to participate in social and educational processes. Such a condition is polyphonic and a proper context for intercultural education.

By attaining their own voice and making it heard in public settings, marginalized groups are empowered. They become interculturally skilled and competent in ways that can work together. Intercultural competence can be both the starting point and the end-results of intercultural education. Roughly speaking, intercultural communication can be described as

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something that is required when significant cultural differences generate different interpretations and expectations of how we should communicate with each other. Furthermore, empathy is mentioned as an essential quality, along with intercultural experience and the ability to listen to others. Other researchers (Bleszynska 2008) also consider the conscious work on the attitudes of openness and respect to be the most important task in order to develop intercultural competence and understanding. Perry and Southwell (2011) list three areas which they consider to be particularly in need of further studies. The first is to obtain a richer understanding of the different ways that intercultural competence can be developed. The second highlights the need for more empirical studies where possibilities for different methods to develop intercultural skills can be assessed. The third, finally, states the need for more studies examining how intercultural competence can be developed among different categories of people; from school children to college students and adults.

Conclusions

The main learning goal of intercultural education, the core of intercultural competence can be described as a widened form of empathy which is active rather than passive and open for other perspectives. In this article, we argued that in order to accomplish this goal we need to rethink both what we mean with learning in general and the role of aesthetic learning. On a general level, we would like to appeal for a change in focus from traditional learning and its accompanying paradigms to transformative learning, since the latter both sheds light on and tries to get rid of the implicit biases that may block intercultural education. We have also looked in the concept of the dialogical imagination and how this has changed the role of aesthetic education in the classroom. We have pointed at the potentials of aesthetic learning processes for intercultural purposes. Additionally, we have raised the issue of multimodality as a practical pedagogical tool for educating responsible citizens. We propose multimodality to stimulate dialogical aesthetic learning processes where different aesthetic languages, traditions and media may learn from each other; also, it may offer spaces for voice-attaining and for bringing forward stories that otherwise might remain unheard. We consider that the atmospheres of polyphony can stimulate conversations across cultures and knowledge perspectives and function as a transformative educational force.

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