Internationalising Teacher Education at Home: Developing Empathy through the Sense of Otherness in Language Learning

Huaping Li

Foreign Languages College, Shanghai Normal University, Shanghai, China

100 Guilin Road, Xuhui District, Shanghai, China, 200234

huaping_li@shnu.edu.cn

ORCiD: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0591-5360

Cristina Costa

School of Education, Durham University, England, UK

Leazes Rd, Durham, DH1 1TA

cristina.costa@durham.ac.uk

ORCiD: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2117-8479

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This study explored how Chinese and Scottish student-teachers from two case-study universities perceived their experiences in foreign language learning in both formal and informal contexts within their home countries, and how the status of a foreign language learner shaped their empathy for culturally and linguistically diverse pupils through a qualitative questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. Drawing on transformative learning theory and its relation to empathy, this study provides a nuanced understanding of how the experience of a language other allows student-teachers to engage with otherness, experience affective sharing, adopt alternative perspectives, and demonstrate empathetic concerns in practices where cultural diversity is apparent. Therefore, we advocate moving student-teachers beyond language acquisition, encouraging them to embrace challenges associated with assuming the position of a language other. This lends insights into the promotion of foreign language learning as a viable internationalisation strategy that benefits all student-teachers by fostering their empathy towards diverse students.

Keywords: Internationalising teacher education at home; foreign language learning; otherness; empathy

Introduction

Linguistic and cultural diversity has become increasingly evident in schools and communities in many parts of the world. Due to the enormous influx of immigrants in Europe, Australia, and North America (OECD 2017), an increasing diverse population is apparent in education. This is not different in publicly funded schools in Scotland. Pupils from a minority ethnic group comprise around one fifth of all pupils in major Scottish cities, such as Edinburgh and Glasgow, with 149 home languages spoken among pupils of different ethnic backgrounds (Scottish Government 2016). Likewise, ethnic, linguistic, and cultural profile of students is also changing in big cities in China. As a result of urbanisation, the population in 20 out of 34 Chinese provincial areas

consists of people from all 56 ethnic groups (Yan and Li 2018). With Han as the majority, 55 ethnic minorities possess 130 indigenous languages, although Mandarin (or Putonghua) and Chinese characters are recognised as national standard spoken and written forms (Chinese Academy of Social Sciences 2012). Cultural diversity in China has been complicated by global mobility of people, bringing a growing number of ethnic minority students from both within and outside mainland China to large cities, such as Shanghai and Beijing (National Bureau of Statistics of China 2021). Mainstream schools in Shanghai, for example, have been encouraged to welcome ethnically and culturally diverse children (Shanghai Municipal Education Commission, 2016).

Teacher education is required to develop student-teachers' readiness for teaching pupils in a multicultural context. As culturally and linguistically diverse children may bring their own beliefs, values, cultures and languages to classrooms, teachers are expected to effectively engage them in personally meaningful learning (Gay 2018). However, teachers as well as student-teachers in many multi-cultural countries – including the UK and China – are mainly from mainstream cultures and shaped by different experiences, cultural norms, and beliefs (Santoro 2014, 2016; Li and Costa 2022). This raises questions about how diversity is represented via the teaching body as well as the cultural knowledge they carry with them, thus pointing to a basic training requirement of preparing student-teachers to respond appropriately to the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse pupils.

Internationalisation in teacher education is promoted as a response to cultural diversity in schools. Built on Knight's (2004) work, internationalisation in higher education is defined as 'the intentional process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions, or delivery of

postsecondary education,' which aims to ensure 'the quality of education and research for all students and staff, and to make a meaningful contribution to society' (de Wit et al. 2015, 29). This suggests that internationalisation does not happen just abroad but also at home, with the latter promoting internationalised practices locally, including within their own institutions and local communities, whilst the former focusing on practices abroad, such as study abroad programmes (Knight 2004). Different approaches to internationalisation in teacher education are seen as avenues for 'not only broadening the knowledge base of teachers but also sensitising them to different perspectives on issues that can affect children, families, communities, and having those perspectives inform the way they teach' (Olmedo and Harbon 2010, 77).

Well-structured study abroad programmes provide life-changing or eye-opening opportunities for student-teachers to directly engage with difference (Li and Costa 2022). Yet, such approaches are usually exclusive in that they are only accessible to a small number of student-teachers, given the financial costs of such opportunities and the over-subscription of teacher education degrees (Stevick and Brown 2016). Additionally, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has led to the postponement or cancellation of study abroad programmes due to travel restrictions and health concerns. These challenges provide an opportunity to re-think and develop internationalisation in more inclusive and diverse ways as alternatives to mass mobility.

Learning a foreign language is an important component of internationalisation in higher education (Knight 2006). It may not only engage the linguistic dimension of learning, but also draws learners' attention to experiences of cultural others and enable them to perceive difference from alternative perspectives (Jones 2020). The importance of learning foreign languages accrues in teacher education in Scotland as demonstrated in the 1+2 language policy which requires Scotland's schools to teach students two

modern languages in addition to English and to help them lead successful lives in multilingual and multicultural society (Scottish Government 2012; Kanaki 2021). Although teachers, particularly primary teachers, are not expected to be fluent in the modern language(s), they need to learn the language(s) and have sufficient knowledge and expertise in using useful resources to include modern languages in their lessons and enhance their teaching (Education Scotland n.d.). In this paper, however, we are not focusing on how the policy promotes the need for Scottish student-teachers to learn and teach two modern languages, but instead, we explore how engaging in the role of a foreign language learner, as a strategy for internationalising teacher education at home, affects their empathy for culturally and linguistically diverse pupils within the current policy context, and ultimately their potential to guide their pupils towards successful lives in a multicultural society. In China, all student-teachers, whether they intend to teach English as a foreign language or other subjects in primary schools in the future, need to take English modules at universities (Li and Santoro 2023), but little research has explored how the foreign language learning experiences shape Chinese student-teachers' readiness for working in, or educating children for, a multicultural context. This qualitative study therefore seeks to understand how Chinese and Scottish student-teachers perceive their experiences in learning foreign languages in both formal and informal contexts within the home country and how the status of a foreign language learner shapes their empathy for culturally and linguistically diverse students.

In what follows, experiences with otherness through internationalisation in teacher education will be discussed as the context for facilitating student-teachers' interactions with culturally and linguistically diverse children.

Experiencing otherness through internationalisation in teacher education

Study abroad programmes are viewed as a key approach to internationalisation by

teacher educators (Li and Santoto 2021) and unique opportunity for student-teachers to experience otherness. They situate student-teachers 'beyond the familiar and what they know and take for granted' (Santoro, Sosu, and Fassetta 2016, 26). Such an experience with the unfamiliar or unexpected as cultural outsiders in host countries can cause cultural disequilibrium or cognitive dissonance (Parr and Chan 2015). Studies show that when student-teachers are struggling with the disequilibrium, they are more likely to become consciously aware of their hidden or invisible assumptions about different people, cultures and practices as well as explore new ways of interpreting them, as a way of trying to bring back the balance within the inner self (Li and Costa 2022; Scoffham and Barnes 2009; Parr and Chan 2015). This self-awareness, if supported by critical reflection, can enable student-teachers to transform their pre-determined frames of reference and construct more open, justifiable, and inclusive views about others as well as others' cultures and practices (Li and Costa 2022), thus moving them away from ethnocentrism (Santoro, Sosu, and Fassetta 2016).

The cultural disequilibrium resulting from the sense of otherness abroad can also motivate student-teachers to become more empathetic towards others. When studying abroad, student-teachers are moved out of their comfort zones without the immediate support of those close or familiar to them. This allows them to be in others' place, experiencing challenges and struggles typical of ethnic minorities in the mainstream host culture (Dantas 2007). Studies reveal that language barriers are one of the greatest challenges student-teachers face while studying abroad. They can work as catalysts for their growth in empathy for others (Trilokekar and Kukar 2011; Hauerwas, Skawinski, and Ryan 2017). For example, Scottish student-teachers who studied in China and Malawi saw language barriers as the cause of intense moments of anxiety or discomfort, which

nonetheless were opportunities to imagine themselves in the shoes of students who might also see language as a challenge (Li and Costa 2022).

Internationalisation efforts in teacher education at home have increasingly integrated the intercultural dimension into modules such as multicultural education, multicultural issues, and culturally responsive pedagogy (Bennet 2013; Bowles 2011). Student-teachers' learning in these modules culminates when they are strategically placed in local schools or communities characterised by cultural diversity. Such placements can allow for the application of conceptual knowledge learned during their training about diversity education and promote transformative learning (Miller-Dyce and Owusu-Ansah 2016). Like studying abroad, student-teachers can hardly retreat to their comfort zones when they are grappling with otherness in community-based, culturally unfamiliar contexts (Sleeter 2001). The role of a cultural outsider is that of challenging individuals to critically examine their own identities, problematising and re-imagining 'oneself as another' as a critical conception of selfhood (Ricoeur, 1994). This cognitive relationship with the self enhances multicultural issues learned from lectures, potentially transforming biases or stereotypical views into deeper and more inclusive understandings of diversity (Bowles 2011). The personal experience with otherness and resultant difficulties in placements in schools or communities can also prompt student-teachers to feel that they are more affectively connected with students who have little English and more informed to support them (Cho and Johnson 2020; VanDeusen 2019).

In both studying abroad experiences and field experiences with cultural diversity, student-teachers' struggles with language barriers are one of the greatest factors that can ultimately lead to their development of alternative perspectives about and empathy for, others (e.g., Li and Costa 2022; Trilokekar and Kukar 2011; Bowles 2011; Cho and Johnson 2020; VanDeusen 2019). Although the benefit of being unable to speak a

different language well to student-teachers' development has been well acknowledged (Hauerwas, Skawinski, and Ryan 2017), there is a lack of an in-depth exploration of how student-teachers engage with different languages personally and professionally.

Additionally, previous studies have looked at the transformative potential of the experience of otherness as demonstrated in the growing empathy for others among student-teachers. However, there is still a need to provide a nuanced understanding of what empathy means. In the next section, empathy will be discussed within transformative learning theory.

Transformative learning and empathy

Transformative learning is often used as the theoretical framework for analysing the transformative potential of internationalisation in teacher education (e.g., Li and Costa 2022; Cho and Johnson 2020; Jacobs and Haberlin 2021; Trilokekar and Kukar 2011; Kambutu and Nganga 2008). More than 40 years ago, Mezirow (1978) first introduced transformative learning to explain how adult learners change their way of interpreting the world. Specifically, transformative learning is the process of generating more justified beliefs or assumptions through the transformation of learners' taken-for-granted perspectives 'to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, emotionally capable of change, and reflective' (Mezirow 2012, 76). Such transformation is facilitated by 'participation in constructive discourse to use the experience of others to assess reasons justifying these assumptions' (ibid.) and make action decisions based on new insights.

Empathy is recognised as a significant component of transformative learning, but it is rarely explored in depth (Taylor and Cranton 2013). Empathy refers to the ability to 'subjectively experience and share in another psychological state or intrinsic feelings,' understand others' perspectives, feelings, and thoughts, and communicate

with others, demonstrating concerns and understanding (Morse et al. 1992, 274). This definition suggests that empathy is a multifaceted concept that involves affective, cognitive, and behavioural dimensions interacting with each other. According to Decety and Yoder (2016), these dimensions include: 1) affective sharing, the ability to feel and understand what others might feel, particularly when others are under distress, 2) perspective taking, the ability to see things from alternative perspectives and adopt perspectives of others, and 3) empathetic concern, the ability to care for others. Openness to alternative perspectives, and concerns about how others feel and think, are not only obvious assets for enhancing critical reflection on and transformation of taken-for-granted assumptions, but also key features of transformative learning (Mezirow 2012; Taylor 2017).

To demonstrate empathetic concerns to others, one needs to enter the world as well as the mind of others, experiencing their struggles and understanding their needs (Mezirow 2003). Such struggles are called 'disorienting dilemmas' by Mezirow (2012) to denote life crises that stimulate learners to question their engrained assumptions (Laros 2017). In teacher education, placing student-teachers in unfamiliar environments allows them to engage with difference as cultural outsiders and experience personal dilemmas or crises within the inner self as their culturally and linguistically diverse pupils might experience. This in turn sets the stage for critical reflection and transformative learning (Li and Costa, 2022; Trilokekar and Kukar 2011).

Yet, empathy is not given as much attention to as critical reflection and rational discourse are in studies about transformative learning (Taylor and Craton 2013). Additionally, how experience with otherness, through foreign language learning, can benefit student-teachers in terms of empathy growth is rarely explored. Hence, this paper draws on transformative learning, zooming in on its relationship to empathy, to

explore how student-teachers develop empathy for culturally and linguistically diverse pupils and how it translates into practice through their foreign language learning experiences.

Methodology

This paper reports on part of a larger project that explored how teacher educators understand internationalisation and how approaches to internationalisation at two case-study universities shape Chinese and Scottish student-teachers' readiness for teaching in a global and multicultural context. Nanhai University in China and Southside University in Scotland were purposively selected as the cases for investigation as each is one of the largest providers of teacher education in its respective national context, and active in internationalising teacher education. Both the case-study universities and participants presented below were given pseudonyms demonstrating their national characteristics for confidentiality concerns.

Participants and data collection

In the larger project, 67 student teacher participants who had learning experiences with international and intercultural dimensions were invited for the qualitative questionnaire at the first stage for seeking their demographic information, their general views about learning experiences that had international or intercultural dimensions, and their consent for participating in follow-up interviews. The questionnaire data revealed that 38 (16 Chinese and 22 Scottish) student-teachers had only participated in internationalisation at home.

For this study, we drew on data collected through a qualitative questionnaire for demographic information as well as for the selection of interview participants, and semi-structured interviews for an in-depth understanding of how student-teachers

viewed their foreign language learning experiences in both formal and informal settings in their home country and how the status of a foreign language learner shaped their empathy for culturally and linguistically diverse pupils. More specifically, the interview involves questions such as how they felt while speaking a foreign language, what challenges they encountered and how they made sense of them while being a language learner, and how the role of a language learner shaped their understanding of and interactions with pupils from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds in their practical experience. The 12 interview participants in this study were selected out of 38 student-teachers who participated in internationalisation at home: six from Southside University in Scotland as shown in Group 1 and the other six in Group 2 from Nanhai University in China (see Table 1). Although the student-teachers demonstrated diversity in the year groups and the subjects they might teach, they were selected for the interview according to the following three criteria: 1) belonging to the majority ethnic group (i.e., British white or Han majority) within each national context; 2) having experienced the role of a foreign language learner in module learning or during placements; and 3) taking or having taken placements in schools characterised by cultural diversity. Additionally, they would mostly work as primary school teachers, with their primary focus not primarily centred on language teaching.

Further information about the participants is shown in Table 1.

Table 1 near here

The interviews were conducted in participants' preferred public locations, such as meeting rooms at their universities or placement schools, lasting approximately one hour each. Audio recordings of the interviews were obtained with participants' consent. Data were collected in the native languages of the participants and transcribed and

translated by the first author who is fluent in both Chinese and English. Both authors have learned English as a foreign language. Having experienced or lived in the studied phenomenon, qualitative researchers possess the subjective knowledge that facilitates them to ask and follow up important questions, develop rapport with, and empathy for, their participants, and make appropriate knowledge claims about the stories told by their participants (Miller and Glassner 1997). In other words, the shared experiences contributed to investigator triangulation in which we demonstrated knowledge and skills closest to the studied phenomenon and able to double check data collection and constantly compare our interpretations of the data (Denzin 2009).

Data analysis

We used thematic analysis to analyse the data collected through the semi-structured interviews. It allowed for our close interaction with, and active interpretation of, the multiple realities presented by our participants, which facilitated our understanding of complex meanings within the rich data set (Guest, MacQueen, and Namey 2011). We coded our data by reading and re-reading the interview transcripts for multiple rounds and conceptually grouped the codes according to common thematic patterns in table formats. This helped us refine and identify themes and subthemes for developing a theorised understanding of the studied phenomenon (Braun and Clarke 2013). Below, we will present the key themes emerging from the analysis.

Results

Both Scottish and Chinese student-teachers featured in this study had many opportunities to be exposed to different languages in both formal and informal settings such as foreign language modules, professional development modules, and placements in local schools. However, they perceived their role as a foreign language learner

differently, which generated different impacts on them as well.

Affective sharing: speaking a foreign language as a language other

The Scottish student-teachers in Group 1 frequently mentioned that learning a foreign language through formal or informal ways such as foreign language modules, professional development modules, and placement settings was very challenging. In the foreign language modules, 'there wasn't much content on, maybe, France or, you know, the context of the language and … it was very much [about] learning to speak a language' (Kathy). While trying to speak the foreign language they were learning, they experienced an enormous amount of frustration. They perceived the challenging experiences of foreign language learners as helpful for them to understand the feelings of their students who might have English as an additional language:

> … when I started that class [of the module on Introduction to French] for the first time, … the tutor was saying, 'This is what you should know already' and I [was] sitting there thinking, 'Well, I don't know this already.' I would start by putting myself in the position of … English not being my first language, and [think about] the difficulties I had while learning another language. (Kathy)

> I just couldn't understand why he [her Spanish tutor who had little English] couldn't understand my question and I didn't know how to communicate with him. … I felt frustrated, so I can understand how frustrating it can be for them [two Chinese students in her placement class] when they don't understand. … Then I always thought back to my experience in learning Spanish. If I didn't understand something when learning a language, then I felt the same. … It's like much easier for me to be able to understand. (Emma)

The challenging experiences of a foreign language learner enabled the Scottish student-teachers to recognise feelings in their students who have no or little English in their placement classes in similar situations. Such learning can also be seen in carefully designed Professional Specialisation, a module focusing on equipping student-teachers

with knowledge and skills to support bilingual learners. For example, Tina, a Scottish Professional Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) student, mentioned that they were often asked by the professor and her teaching assistant who is Chinese to learn to say some words and phrases in different foreign languages. When trying to say some foreign words, she felt that:

> It's just very scary… it makes you quite nervous as well. It's the fear of making a mistake in front of everyone. … I can understand more about children who speak little English and … who may also be suffering or nervous. (Tina)

The experience with otherness in learning a foreign language in informal settings would also bond Scottish student-teachers with their students who might be fearful of making mistakes when speaking English as shown in Ronald's attempt to speak Polish to two Polish students in his class at the placement school which was characterised by cultural diversity in Scotland. He said,

> They laughed alone when I would say things wrong, but I would say to them that I understand how you feel when you learn English. (Ronald)

The responses of the Scottish participants suggest that challenging experiences in trying to speak a foreign language could move them beyond learning the language itself. Such experiences provide opportunities to understand how others may feel as well as what may have caused these feelings.

Differently, there was little indication in the data that the Chinese student-teachers in Group 2 developed affective sharing with culturally and linguistically diverse people through their experiences of learning a foreign language. All the Chinese student-teachers had undertaken foreign language (predominantly English) modules. The most commonly mentioned language modules were College English (which was conducted by Chinese lecturers), and Oral English (which was conducted by native

English speakers). However, they rarely felt they were disoriented or frustrated foreign language learners. This might be related to few opportunities to use or speak English as a language other. In College English:

> The lecturer dominated the talk, and it had nothing to do with the students. (Lishi)

> There were 61 students in the class [and] the lecturer mainly focused on grammar and vocabulary rather than speaking. (Peng)

> There were more opportunities for practising listening, reading, and writing and few opportunities for speaking … or interacting with others. … The teacher asked questions sometimes, but they were centred around the textbook. (Ling)

In Oral English, the Chinese student-teachers mentioned that they had smaller classes, and more opportunities to communicate with their lecturers who were native English speakers. However, the Chinese student-teachers found it was not challenging as demonstrated below:

> The module was quite relaxing, but not very helpful, because we only used the words we knew. (Ling)

These experiences in English modules demonstrate that the Chinese student-teachers' small amount of personal engagement in the learning context, combined with unchallenging learning experiences, could potentially contribute to the limited opportunities for them to either experience frustrating moments as English learners, or to develop empathy for others. As is summarised by a Chinese student teacher,

> We need more opportunities to experience how to communicate with others in the foreign language and better understand how to manage a culturally diverse class [in the future]. (Yiwen)

Perspective taking: making sense of challenges of being a language other

Aside from imagining themselves in others' emotional world through the challenging experiences of a foreign language learner, most of the Scottish student-teachers became more critically aware of their taken-for-granted perspectives and could develop new views about themselves and others. They learned the invisible aspects of themselves and their own language by engaging with others in a different language. As Tina found that 'I'm not the best communicator. … I think I'm very xx [the adjective form of the Scottish city where she lives]. … I talk very fast.' Likewise, Nicole who was educated in a culturally homogenous school in Ireland also realised that 'Scottish and Irish love to put in words that don't make much sense.' Such self-awareness also helped them question Scottish people's hegemonic views towards English and become more open to other languages and cultures. As Emma put it,

> I think like from my own learning experience – I think people from other countries, they are more willing to learn English than we are to learn other languages. And I do think it has been seen as English is the main language, the predominant world; there is no need to learn any other languages. …. So, I think there is a lot bit of innocence of some people, like we are – not as willing to give it a go. … [We] are still not open to other languages and cultures just because of the way we've been brought up. … I've got like more willing to learn a language [and] I think it just opens your doors a lot more to things.

The discontent with the dominant narrative about their mother tongue, and the reformulation of their reified views about foreign language learning are key features of transformative learning, which result in generating more dependable and justified opinions or interpretations (Mezirow 2012). Such transformation is further seen in the more justified perspectives the Scottish student-teachers adopted about culturally and linguistically diverse children who are often viewed as deficit or abnormal others in the Western context (VanDeusen 2019). For example, they said that having experienced

difficulties in learning a foreign language:

> I understand if someone is different and may not have English as the first language, they are working 10 times harder – they are working so much more to process what's going on. I respect the children who are trying their extra bit harder. … That for me is more important to fully support them for being unique and who they are than seeing them as a test mark or exam result. (Nicole)

> I would not say that they are not very good just because of their language. They might be – if it was in their own language, they might be fluent and saying through understanding everything. So, it's not that they are slow learners; [it's not] that they can't learn. It's because they are still developing their English. (Emma)

Perspective taking as is shown above allowed the Scottish student-teachers to suspend judgement or avoid premature judgement about their students whose English was non-existent or little. This means that the challenging experiences of a language other can also develop the cognitive dimension of empathy of the Scottish student-teachers.

By contrast, the Chinese student-teachers' experiences of learning English failed to move them beyond learning the language itself. They rarely related their learning experiences to professional understanding or practices in multicultural context. Even when most of them said they had students from abroad or other ethnic minority backgrounds from within China at their placement schools, they would treat all the students in the same way as shown below:

> I would teach in Mandarin and […] view the French student without discrimination, treat all the students equally, and won't single him out. (Peng)

This response suggests that the Chinese students can hardly understand the experience of learning in another language from the perspectives of a language other. They may make overgeneralised views about people from different cultural and linguistic

backgrounds from their interaction with lecturers from English-speaking countries by saying,

> I find the British are more serious while the Americans are more humorous, [so] I
> think I would view them differently. (Lishi)

These findings suggest that the experience to inhabit a language other offers forms of reflection on both the inner self and external learning context, which are essential elements to adopt a more inclusive perspective about difference as a form of empathy.

Empathetic concerns: making changes in practice

Having tried the role of a language other and developed a more open mind through perspective taking, the Scottish student-teachers were able to demonstrate empathetic concerns to their students who had English as an additional language and make informed actions in interactions with them. They emphasised that they would engage the students within a relaxing learning community through the transfer of authority from the teacher to students as they did in placement experiences:

> … we first bonded because we spoke French to each other. She [the Nigerian girl
> who spoke French] kind of thought – 'haha, you can speak a bit French. I do know
> how to speak French.' So, she would teach me more French. It was like a nice,
> special, more relaxing relationship to help with the child than a teacher-student
> [relationship]. (Nicole)

> It [Having the Polish children teach me Polish] really helped develop a good bond
> between me and the other two students, because we were learning something
> together and they can see that I was taking the time – they weren't getting
> frustrated with me and I wasn't getting frustrated with them, because we were
> trying to learn [another] language. (Ronald)

These responses suggest that the transfer of authority could allow the Scottish student-

teachers to establish the bond with students and reduce the level of anxiety on the part of the students. Apart from 'using them to be able to teach me and I learn the language from them', Tina would also encourage peer learning 'letting the children not only learn about Scotland, but also learn about each other's cultures […] in order to build a safe and inclusive learning environment.'

More specific efforts in ensuring ethnic minority students' involvement and valuing the cultural capital they might bring to the classroom are reflected in the following examples:

> I let them talk about their language and how they would say things like 'How are you?' … That really brings them in because they are shown in their first language… That makes them feel safe and comfortable in the classroom because they're going to feel that they are included, not left to the side. (Ronald)

> I would ask, 'what [music] do you often listen to at home and … what do you do [for the music] in your community? Can you please teach us?' – to make them feel safe and secure to communicate their voices and contribute. (Charles)

These action decisions are signs of the Scottish student-teachers' growth in the behavioural dimension of empathy for culturally and linguistically diverse students. The action decisions also suggest that they understand the importance of not only creating a caring learning community for ethnic minority students who are still not confident in the language spoken in the mainstream society, but also of mediating imbalanced power relationships brought about by ethnicity, language and culture through knowledge sharing or through the provision of opportunities for children to try on different roles.

Although many of the Scottish student-teachers acknowledged how the challenges of learning a foreign language allowed them to better understand and support culturally and linguistically diverse students, they may also need the knowledge and

skills to discuss professional issues related to cultural diversity. As some of them

mentioned,

> Like [in the Professional Specialisation module] we have been talking about
> valuing the knowledge of their culture and language. (Tina)

> In the module [lectures on diversity, human rights and social justice], you had little
> snippets of diversity issues in society and how they impact or are transferred into
> education in schools or educational settings. (Charles)

In the Chinese context, the student-teachers' learning experiences in the foreign

language modules were mainly about learning the foreign language itself, which did not

facilitate them to learn to relate language learning experiences to their future profession

in a multicultural context. Despite their acknowledgement of 'our society is becoming

increasingly multicultural, and we have to learn to respect and cooperate with each

other' (Lishi), they showed no signs of having the knowledge and skills to support

culturally and linguistically diverse students in an empathetic and responsive way.

Some of them mentioned that when they were leading multicultural classrooms,

> I would ask peers to teach the ethnic minority students how to speak our language
> and help them overcome language barriers. (Yiwen)

> I would encourage children who are Han Chinese [the majority or the largest ethnic
> group in China] to respect those from other ethnic groups and get rid of their
> stereotypes by avoiding talking about some sensitive topics. (Lishi)

> If culturally and linguistically diverse children are studying in my class, I would
> avoid cultural conflicts … by not talking about something controversial among
> children. (Dilan)

These responses show that the Chinese student-teachers would respond to sensitive

topics or cultural differences by simply avoiding them entirely, rather than embracing

them as valuable assets that children might bring with them to the classroom. This can be more specifically seen in the following example:

> In [my placement] class, there is a French boy called Adi in Primary One. He can speak Mandarin. … Once, I asked him to stand up to answer my question, but he was unwilling to stand up. He wanted to answer the question by just sitting there. I said, 'It's a way of showing your respect to the teacher by standing up.' He was still unwilling to stand up. And then, I continued my lesson and just ignored this. [I think] he might have received his preschool education in a more relaxed way. I, then, respected him by allowing him to sit there when answering my questions. (Peng)

Though Peng mentioned that he showed respect towards the French child in this incident, he did not include the child in the mainstream Chinese classroom. Instead, he singled the French child out by allowing him to answer questions in a different manner. He made some guesses about the child's prior experience, but he was unable to make further attempts to know the child.

The Chinese student-teachers' decision to not speak about cultural differences or sensitive issues is an indication of their inability to be open to alternative perspectives, and of their failure to demonstrate empathetic concerns and care. Even when some of the Chinese student-teachers recognised the need to know their students by communicating with parents, 'we don't know how to relate the communication between myself and parents to cultural differences in classrooms' (Yiwen).

Although most of the Chinese student-teachers mentioned that they had undertaken other modules with global, international, or intercultural dimensions, they rarely related them to their teaching in a multicultural context. As they reported,

> The exploration of educational issues in other countries in the module [Comparative Educational Studies] is quite helpful for our subject learning, and we

have developed broader horizons by getting to know different curricula and educational ideas in different countries. (Dilan)

It has equipped me with broader views … and enabled me to look at education beyond the confines of China, to learn the merits of others and then make our education competitive. (Peng)

These professionally specialised modules focused more on learning educational ideas from others rather than looking at how the learning experiences might make them open to different perspectives and ways of doing things in linguistically and culturally diverse contexts, which resonates with Chinese teacher educators' views about internationalisation in teacher education (Li and Santoto 2021).

Discussion

This study highlights the importance of the role of a language other in developing student-teachers' empathy for culturally and linguistically diverse students. Our findings affirm that foreign language learning can engage the linguistic aspects of learning as well as provide opportunities to experience otherness (Jones 2020). Yet, the linguistic aspects of learning and the learning experience of otherness have different implications for teacher education.

When student-teachers learn to use or speak a different language or engage in intercultural dialogues in a language other than their own in formal and informal learning settings, they are likely to enter contexts in which they can experience otherness. The sense of otherness and the intense emotions brought by it could potentially trigger increased awareness of the self and others as well as develop abilities to share the psychological state of others as is shown in the Scottish student teachers' ability to understand how others may feel when they were unable to speak a different language well. Yet, if there is no opportunity for student-teachers to speak in a foreign

language in a challenging context, it could become harder for them to enter the emotional world of a language other as is evident in the experiences the Chinese student-teachers reported. In transformative learning theory, transformative experiences are the media for transformation (Taylor and Cranton 2013). For this study, challenging experiences of a language other are identified as the essential media for developing student-teachers' affective dimension of empathy that involves reimagining the self through the eyes of similar others who are often deprived of authority as the minority (Warren 2018). Specifically, the challenging spaces the Scottish student-teachers entered gave them the opportunity to become humble language learners.

Additionally, our study agrees with Mezirow (2012) and other researchers that a disorienting dilemma (as demonstrated in discomfort, discontent, pain, anxiety and shame) can trigger individuals' critical reflection on and transformation of their taken-for-granted views (Li and Costa 2022; Trilokekar and Kukar 2011). However, our study lends insight into how the affective dimension serves as the facilitator for perspective taking, the cognitive dimension of empathy, as a form of 'expansion of consciousness' (Elias 1997, 2). Emotions are inherently linked to perspective taking, because 'purely objective reasoning cannot determine what to notice, what to attend to, and what to inquire about' (van Woerkom 2010, 348). While engaging with others in a different language, the emotions caused by the experience of a language other enable student-teachers to distance themselves from the familiar self to a language other. Such a process of distancing the self, for example, in the Scottish student-teachers' experiences with otherness, has made them more consciously aware of their invisible beliefs as well as their attitudes towards themselves and others. This self-awareness further allowed them to understand the additional role the experience of a language other can play in their own development as it enabled them to adopt more open and inclusive

perspectives rather than seeing a language other from a deficit perspective (VanDeusen 2019).

The lack of opportunity for student-teachers to step outside their comfort zones while learning a foreign language can hardly establish 'a dialogue with those unconscious aspects of [themselves] seeking expression through various images, feelings, and behaviours within the learning setting' (Dirkx 2006, 22). Additionally, when experiences of learning a foreign language and encounters with culturally and linguistically diverse others go unchallenged, student-teachers miss a chance to attend to the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students. Instead, they are likely to reinforce stereotypical views about others as found among the Chinese student-teachers.

Our study also reveals that perspective taking has made student-teachers more interested in exploring new ways to interact with culturally and linguistically diverse students and engaging them in more caring, relaxing, and inclusive classrooms in their placement settings. The Scottish student-teachers' efforts in trying on new roles, exploring new relationships, and integrating alternative perspectives into interactions with culturally and linguistically diverse students indicate that they have experienced the higher level of transformative learning than remaining at the level of recognising disorienting dilemmas and critically assessing their taken-for-granted assumptions (Mezirow 2012). This finding extends existing literature by providing a nuanced understanding of how student-teachers' transformation of taken-for-granted views and stronger sensitivity to cultural others as shown in previous studies (Li and Costa 2022; Trilokekar and Kukar 2011; Bowles 2011; Cho and Johnson 2020; VanDeusen 2019) are translated into the behavioural dimension of empathy in practice.

This also offers an empirical explanation for the belief that 'perspective taking is the anchoring dimension of the application of empathy in social interaction' (Warren

2018, 171). We add that the translation of the new perspectives to empathetic practices also requires formal learning support (for example, modules as those provided to the Scottish student-teachers) that enhance a knowledge base for negotiating diversity issues and professional decisions. Without the anchor of perspective taking and the support of relevant modules, student-teachers may easily reduce the complexities of diversity issues to simplistic avoidance as shown in the Chinese student-teachers' avoidance of discussing them in their multicultural placement classrooms.

This study makes an original contribution to extant literature by suggesting that transformative learning can happen when student teachers are transformed into a language other. It contributes to the internationalisation agenda of teacher education in terms of creating an alternative context for the experience of otherness and bonding student-teachers with children of other cultures and languages, if studying abroad is not possible, as exemplified by the COVID-19 pandemic. Our findings also suggest that to make foreign language learning an effective means of internationalising teacher education for a multicultural context, it is essential for teacher educators, particularly those who are teaching foreign languages to student-teachers, to move beyond teaching the language itself. It is imperative that foreign language teaching be embedded in a multicultural context and recognise the value of the challenges experienced by a language other to teacher education. Such an understanding may help teacher educators carefully design learning activities that allow student-teachers to engage with their affective side of learning as well as experience perspective taking and empathetic concerns.

In this qualitative study, the role of a language other is explored in a stand-alone manner, though a cultural outsider is a more encompassing concept that is often looked at in the wealth of research about internationalisation in teacher education. We are

curious about the extent to which foreign language experiences, combined with the sense of otherness, can be promoted as an alternative approach to internationalisation in teacher education to allow for transformative learning, if or when intercultural immersion experiences are restricted or impossible. Although professionally specialised modules are found to be helpful, additional research is still required for an in-depth understanding of how they facilitate student-teachers' engagement with otherness when learning a foreign language. The views of Scottish and Chinese student-teachers who are from their mainstream cultures in this study offers valuable comparisons and in-depth understanding, but concerns may arise regarding whether the outcomes derived from our study could potentially be attributed to other factors. For instance, these factors might encompass variations in student-teachers' placements across schools characterised by varying degrees of cultural diversity or discrepancies in opportunities for them to interact with culturally and linguistically diverse pupils. Nevertheless, it is important to note that in a separate paper, we have established and posited that placing student teachers directly in schools abroad may not always allow for transformative learning as the intercultural experience could reinforce their ethnocentric views without professional support (Li and Costa 2022). Despite the varied year groups and subjects they might teach among these student-teachers in our small sample, we have not identified difference in the impact of these variables on their engagement with otherness as foreign language learners. Furthermore, we acknowledge that insights derived from these two unique cases may not be equally applicable to a broader and more diverse population of student-teachers. Nonetheless, we emphasise that the intent of a qualitative study does not necessarily entail universal generalisation. Future research may benefit from including quantitative data collection methods within a larger sample

size to ascertain correlations among variables of diverse student-teachers, particularly

those from more culturally and linguistically diverse groups.

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Table 1. Participants and experiences