



Views and Attitudes of Staff and Students towards the  
Significance of Intercultural Awareness in Foreign Language  
Teaching and Learning in an Australian University Context

by  
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Doctor of Philosophy

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# Declaration of originality

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# Abstract

Globalisation is influencing foreign language education at universities worldwide. People now live in an increasingly multicultural world where different cultural practices have blended. Thus, intercultural awareness has now become a vital part of foreign language learning.

The aim of the study was to investigate teachers' and students' beliefs and understandings of the significance of intercultural awareness in foreign language teaching and learning in a university context. As the study was situated within the Tasmanian context, it sought to provide contextual information and implications meaningful and appropriate to the local language learning environment. The investigation focused on three areas: generalising the participants' perceptions of the importance of intercultural awareness in general; examining their intercultural experiences, personally and professionally, especially in relation to language teaching and learning; and identifying the factors that influenced the way they teach and learn.

The study employed both quantitative and qualitative research approaches for data collection and analysis. It included two phases: questionnaire survey and subsequent interview. The statistical data were analysed using the SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Science) software version 20.0. The textual data collected from the interviews were analysed using the NVivo qualitative data software version 10.0. Thematic analysis was used in the qualitative data analysis.

The results of this study indicated strong recognition of the key role that intercultural awareness plays in foreign language teaching and learning. Based on the findings, pedagogical implications and directions for further research were also addressed. The findings suggested that language learners should cultivate intercultural awareness in the process of their language learning as it is considered the major goal of foreign language learning. Meanwhile, teachers' intercultural awareness could influence their language teaching methodology and course

design. A paradigm shift from a traditional to an intercultural stance in language education poses a challenge for both language teachers and students if they wish to meet the goals of foreign language education for the global context.

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# Table of contents

<b>Declaration of originality</b> .....	<b>ii</b>
<b>Statement of authority of access</b> .....	<b>iii</b>
<b>Statement of ethical conduct</b> .....	<b>iv</b>
<b>Abstract</b> .....	<b>v</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b> .....	<b>vii</b>
<b>List of tables</b> .....	<b>xiv</b>
<b>List of figures</b> .....	<b>xvii</b>
<b>1. Chapter 1 – Introduction</b> .....	<b>1</b>
1.1 Introduction .....	1
1.2 Background .....	1
1.3 Context of the study .....	6
1.4 Aim and objectives of the study .....	6
1.5 Research methods .....	8
1.5.1 Questionnaire .....	10
1.5.2 Interview .....	11
1.6 Significance .....	13
1.7 Limitations of the study .....	14
1.8 Ethics of research .....	14
1.9 Outline to chapters .....	16
1.10 Conclusion .....	17
<b>2. Chapter 2 – Literature Review</b> .....	<b>18</b>
2.1 Introduction .....	18

---

2.2	Terminology.....	18
2.2.1	Intercultural awareness .....	18
2.2.2	Second language and foreign language.....	21
2.3	Language teaching and learning theory.....	22
2.3.1	Behaviourist theory and cognitive theory .....	23
2.3.2	Communicative language teaching .....	24
2.3.3	Technology in language teaching and learning.....	27
2.4	Culture study in language.....	30
2.5	Intercultural communication .....	35
2.5.1	Culture .....	35
2.5.2	Communication.....	44
2.5.3	Culture and communication.....	48
2.5.4	Intercultural communication.....	49
2.6	International, national and local contexts for language learning.....	59
2.6.1	International context .....	59
2.6.2	National context.....	60
2.6.3	Local context .....	65
2.7	Conclusion .....	70
<b>3.</b>	<b>Chapter 3 – Methodology .....</b>	<b>71</b>
3.1	Introduction.....	71
3.2	Research approaches .....	71
3.2.1	Qualitative and quantitative approaches .....	71
3.2.2	Characteristics of qualitative research .....	74

---

3.2.3	Characteristics of quantitative research .....	76
3.2.4	This research study approach.....	77
3.2.5	Limitations and constraints .....	81
3.3	Research design.....	81
3.3.1	Case study.....	83
3.3.2	Types of case study.....	85
3.3.3	Capacity of case study .....	86
3.4	Methods and techniques .....	87
3.4.1	Questionnaire.....	88
3.4.2	Designing the questionnaire.....	89
3.4.3	Interview .....	92
3.4.4	Management of interviews.....	93
3.4.5	Ethics of research.....	94
3.5	Data collection .....	95
3.5.1	Participants and sampling .....	95
3.5.2	A comparison of the study samples .....	97
3.5.3	Reliability and validity.....	98
3.5.4	Triangulation .....	104
3.5.5	Pilot study.....	105
3.6	Data analysis .....	106
3.6.1	Quantitative data analysis .....	107
3.6.2	Qualitative data analysis .....	108
3.7	Conclusion .....	111

---

<b>4</b>	<b>Chapter 4 – Quantitative Data Analysis .....</b>	<b>112</b>
4.1	Introduction.....	112
4.2	Analysis techniques.....	112
4.3	Survey administration and response rate.....	114
4.4	Profile of the participants .....	116
4.5	Descriptive statistics of participants’ responses .....	119
4.5.1	Views about Australia and the world.....	120
4.5.2	Personal intercultural experience .....	120
4.5.3	Aspects of intercultural awareness.....	121
4.5.4	Intercultural awareness and language teaching and learning .....	122
4.5.5	Intercultural awareness in course design .....	123
4.5.6	Personal experience in a language program.....	125
4.6	Factors that influence participants’ opinions.....	126
4.6.1	Language background.....	127
4.6.2	Occupation.....	129
4.6.3	Category of students .....	132
4.6.4	Length of teaching .....	134
4.6.5	Age group .....	135
4.7	Conclusion .....	139
<b>5.</b>	<b>Chapter 5 – Qualitative Data Analysis.....</b>	<b>141</b>
5.1	Introduction.....	141
5.2	Qualitative data analysis .....	142
5.2.1	Qualitative data analysis process .....	143

---

5.2.2	Open-ended questionnaire section .....	150
5.2.3	Semi-structured interview questions .....	151
5.3	Results .....	153
5.3.1	Theme 1: Interpretation of intercultural awareness .....	154
5.3.2	Theme 2: Significance of intercultural awareness .....	158
5.3.3	Theme 3: Experiences relating to intercultural awareness .....	162
5.3.4	Theme 4: Attitudes towards intercultural awareness .....	164
5.3.5	Theme 5: Strategies to enhance intercultural awareness.....	167
5.4	Conclusion .....	172
<b>6.</b>	<b>Chapter 6 – Discussion.....</b>	<b>174</b>
6.1	Introduction.....	174
6.2	General discussion .....	174
6.3	Research objectives.....	176
6.3.1	Research objective 1: Views towards the concept of intercultural awareness .....	176
6.3.2	Research objective 2: Perceptions towards the significance of intercultural awareness in foreign language teaching and learning .....	178
6.3.3	Research objective 3: Intercultural experiences relating to language teaching and learning .....	184
6.3.4	Research objective 4: Compared perspectives between teaching staff and students	187
6.3.5	Research objective 5: Recommendations for enhancing intercultural communication competence .....	189
6.4	Conclusion .....	202
<b>7.</b>	<b>Chapter 7 – Conclusion .....</b>	<b>204</b>
7.1	Introduction.....	204
7.2	What has been achieved .....	204

---

7.3	Overall discussion of findings.....	206
7.3.1	Technology-enhanced language teaching and learning .....	207
7.3.2	Influential factors on cultural integration.....	209
7.3.3	Learning strategies.....	210
7.4	Recommendations and implications.....	212
7.5	Future research.....	214
7.6	Personal journey to research .....	215
7.7	Conclusion .....	217
	<b>References.....</b>	<b>220</b>
	<b>Appendix A – Ethics approval .....</b>	<b>247</b>
	<b>Appendix B – Questionnaire for teaching staff .....</b>	<b>250</b>
	<b>Appendix C – Questionnaire for students.....</b>	<b>256</b>
	<b>Appendix D – Interview schedule and questions for teaching staff.....</b>	<b>263</b>
	<b>Appendix E – Interview schedule and questions for students .....</b>	<b>266</b>
	<b>Appendix F – Email to Head of School .....</b>	<b>269</b>
	<b>Appendix G – Information sheet for Head of School .....</b>	<b>271</b>
	<b>Appendix H – Information sheet for Questionnaire.....</b>	<b>275</b>
	<b>Appendix I – Information sheet for interview.....</b>	<b>278</b>
	<b>Appendix J – Consent form .....</b>	<b>281</b>
	<b>Appendix K – Coding procedure from NVivo.....</b>	<b>284</b>

# List of tables

Table 3.1 <i>Research objectives, instruments and specific items</i> .....	80
Table 3.2 <i>A comparison of the study samples</i> .....	97
Table 3.3 <i>Comparison of criteria</i> .....	99
Table 4.1 <i>Staff participants' profile</i> .....	116
Table 4.2 <i>Student participants' profile</i> .....	117
Table 4.3 <i>Participants' responses on views about Australia and the world</i> .....	120
Table 4.4 <i>Participants' responses on personal intercultural experience</i> .....	120
Table 4.5 <i>Participants' responses on aspects of intercultural awareness</i> .....	121
Table 4.6 <i>Participants' responses on intercultural awareness and language teaching and learning</i> .....	122
Table 4.7 <i>Participants' responses on intercultural awareness in course design</i> .....	123
Table 4.8 <i>Participants' responses on personal experience in a language program</i> .....	125
Table 4.9 <i>Mann-Whitney U test on Q35 'Translation should be avoided in language teaching' by category of students</i> .....	126
Table 4.10 <i>Mann-Whitney U test on Q38 'A language other than English should be taught as a compulsory unit in the Nursing course.' by language background</i> .....	127
Table 4.11 <i>Mann-Whitney U test on Q39 'A language other than English should be taught as a compulsory unit in the Law course.' by language background</i> .....	127
Table 4.12 <i>Mann-Whitney U test on Q40 'A language other than English should be taught as a compulsory unit in the Business/Commerce course.' by language background</i> .....	128
Table 4.13 <i>Mann-Whitney U test on Q41 'A language other than English should be taught as a compulsory unit in the Science course.' by language background</i> .....	128

---

Table 4.14 Mann-Whitney U test on Q42 'A language other than English should be taught as a compulsory unit in the Arts course.' by language background .....	129
Table 4.15 Mann-Whitney U test on Q38 'A language other than English should be taught as a compulsory unit in the Nursing course.' by occupation .....	129
Table 4.16 Mann-Whitney U test on Q39 'A language other than English should be taught as a compulsory unit in the Law course.' by occupation .....	130
Table 4.17 Mann-Whitney U test on Q40 'A language other than English should be taught as a compulsory unit in the Business/Commerce course.' by occupation.....	130
Table 4.18 Mann-Whitney U test on Q41 'A language other than English should be taught as a compulsory unit in the Science course.' by occupation .....	131
Table 4.19 Mann-Whitney U test on Q42 'A language other than English should be taught as a compulsory unit in the Arts course.' by occupation .....	131
Table 4.20 Mann-Whitney U test on Q38 'A language other than English should be taught as a compulsory unit in the Nursing course.' by category of students .....	132
Table 4.21 Mann-Whitney U test on Q39 'A language other than English should be taught as a compulsory unit in the Law course.' by category of students .....	132
Table 4.22 Mann-Whitney U test on Q40 'A language other than English should be taught as a compulsory unit in the Business/Commerce course.' by category of students .....	133
Table 4.23 Mann-Whitney U test on Q42 'A language other than English should be taught as a compulsory unit in the Arts course.' by category of students .....	133
Table 4.24 Kruskal-Wallis test on Q35 'Translation should be avoided in language teaching' by length of teaching .....	134
Table 4.25 Kruskal-Wallis test on Q39 'A language other than English should be taught as a compulsory unit in the Law course.' by age groups .....	135
Table 4.26 Kruskal-Wallis test on Q40 'A language other than English should be taught as a compulsory unit in the Business/Commerce course.' by age groups .....	136
Table 4.27 Kruskal-Wallis test on Q41 'A language other than English should be taught as a compulsory unit in the Science course.' by age groups .....	136

---

Table 4.28 <i>Kruskal-Wallis test on Q42 'A language other than English should be taught as a compulsory unit in the Arts course.' by age groups</i> .....	137
Table 4.29 <i>P-values of Q39-42</i> .....	138
Table 5.1 <i>Research objectives, instruments and question items</i> .....	142
Table 5.2 <i>Participants of semi-structured interviews</i> .....	152
Table 5.3 <i>Interpretation of intercultural awareness</i> .....	154
Table 5.4 <i>Significance of intercultural awareness</i> .....	158
Table 5.5 <i>Experiences relating to intercultural awareness</i> .....	162
Table 5.6 <i>Attitudes towards intercultural awareness</i> .....	164
Table 5.7 <i>Strategies to enhance intercultural awareness</i> .....	167

# List of figures

<i>Figure 2.1</i> Points of articulation between culture and language .....	34
<i>Figure 2.2</i> Software of the mind .....	36
<i>Figure 2.3</i> Components of culture .....	39
<i>Figure 2.4</i> The cultural iceberg .....	41
<i>Figure 2.5</i> A model of communication .....	45
<i>Figure 2.6</i> A pathway for developing intercultural competence .....	57
<i>Figure 2.7</i> Making connections .....	59
<i>Figure 3.1</i> Research design of this study .....	82
<i>Figure 5.1</i> Qualitative data analytic process.....	150

# **1. Chapter 1 – Introduction**

## **1.1 Introduction**

The purpose of this chapter is to present an overview of the study, to provide a description of the background of the study, the context, the aims and the significance of the study, the research methodology, ethical considerations and the limitations. An outline of the content of future chapters is also presented.

## **1.2 Background**

Nowadays, rapid developments in science and technology, especially advances in transportation and telecommunication, have literally shrunk the world into a “global village”, where people of different cultural backgrounds and languages can easily transcend the limits of time and space and get in touch with one another. People are travelling more and the number of people working or settling down in foreign countries, in search of better jobs or better living conditions, is increasing all the time. Take Australia as an example; Australian society has been shaped by a long history of immigration. Since 1945 around 6.5 million people have arrived as new settlers, and, in 2006, nearly one in four (24%) Australian residents were born overseas (Linacre, 2007). In the six months from July to December 2008, the number of settler arrivals was 81,752- a 17.5% increase over the corresponding period for the previous year (Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2009).

The number of settlers arriving in Australia between July 2010 and June 2011 totalled 127, 460. These settlers came from more than 200 countries. At 30 September 2011, the estimated population for Australia was 22.69 million. This is an annual increase of 319, 600 people and a population growth rate of 1.4 % (Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2013).

According to the 2011 Australian Bureau of Statistics (2013b), the Census revealed that over a quarter (26%) of Australia's population was born overseas and a further one-fifth (20%) had at least one overseas-born parent. Throughout the 100 years since the first National Census in 1911, migrants have made up a large component of the Australian population. Historically, the majority of migrants

have come from Europe; however, there are increasingly more Australians who were born in Asia and other parts of the world. This pattern of migration is evident in the makeup of the richly diverse society recorded in the 2011 Census. This diversity can be seen in the variety of languages, religions, ancestries and birthplaces reported by Australians. The most common languages spoken at home (other than English) were Mandarin (1.7%), Italian (1.5%), Arabic (1.4%), Cantonese (1.3%) and Greek (1.3%).

In addition, globalisation is influencing universities worldwide through market competition. According to Marginson (2008a), the global position of Australian higher education is central to national policy and capacity in higher education. The growth of transnational education over recent decades has provided Australia with the opportunity to develop a market for international students, offering courses and qualifications that are accredited globally (Australia Bureau of Statistics, 2009). Internationalisation of education has become a significant development in Australian universities. From 1996 to 2006 international students rose from 53,188 to 250,794 (371.5 %) while domestic student numbers increased by just 26.2 % to 733,352 (Marginson, 2008b). In 2009, over one in five (22%) tertiary students studying in Australia were international students (Australia Bureau of Statistics, 2013a).

The international education sector is important not only to Australian society, but also to the country's economy. Between 2009 and 2010, enrolments declined in all international education sectors except higher education, which increased to 242,000, a growth of 7.3%. In 2010, there were 617,000 overseas student enrolments in various courses across all international education sectors (Australia Bureau of Statistics, 2013a). Healy (2009) reported in "The Australian" newspaper that the \$15.5 billion export education boom continued to defy the global recession, showing a record annual growth of 20.8 % in the number of international students in universities and vocational colleges for the key March enrolment period. International education activity contributed \$16.3 billion in export income to the Australian economy in 2010–11 (Australia Bureau of Statistics, 2013a).

With the increase of international students' participation in on-line, in-country and face-to-face teaching modes, universities all over the world have promoted research on intercultural communication and education. For example, many universities all over the world have “study-abroad” programs as part of their global study curriculum, to enable students to experience foreign languages and cultures. In particular, some universities in Australia also offer short-term in-country language programs to provide students with an opportunity to learn a foreign language in a natural immersion environment.

The world has opened numerous doors enabling people of different cultural and geographical backgrounds to interact. One of the global changes which has triggered these advances is the need to communicate effectively with people from different cultures in different languages. McConachy (2008) states that there is an increasing interest in the ways in which language and culture intersect and the implications of this affect intercultural communication, as well as language teaching and learning. Learning languages other than English opens a whole new world of insights, perspectives and possibilities to learners. As language educators in the twenty-first century, one of the most important tasks is to help students learn about the rich variety of people in this multicultural world. Lippmann (as cited in Hatfield, Carr, & Nyikos, 1993) claims that there is no better way of making people conscious of phenomena outside their own culture than for them to learn a foreign language.

Cates (1999) also argues that global education is a new approach to language teaching that aims to enable students to effectively acquire a foreign language while empowering them with the knowledge, skills and commitment required by world citizens to solve global problems. Any country or person prepared to operate globally in accordance with current and expected global trends can benefit from such an initiative, socially, economically and personally. With companies growing globally and the outsourcing of jobs, those in the workforce find themselves having to interact with people from different cultures every day. There is growing demand from employers for workers with tertiary qualifications that include a strong international component – both from the perspective of curriculum content and through exposure to different cultures to develop

intercultural and language skills and competencies. International job applicants who are proficient in at least two languages will be at a distinct advantage in the global market (The Education Office of the French Cultural Services, 2013).

According to a recent review of research released by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) (2009), the case for increased second language learning in Australia is better grounded in the personal benefits to individual learners than in arguments about economic and social benefits. ACER Chief Executive Professor Geoff Masters (Australian Council for Educational Research, 2009) holds that even limited contact with a second language can have a positive effect by supporting and illuminating students' knowledge of their first language. It seems likely that those with a grasp of a second language will produce better opportunities for themselves on the global economic and political stage, and their knowledge about both the target culture and their own will simultaneously be enriched through language learning. Messimeri (2009) asserts that those learning new languages gain a greater appreciation and insight into the culture of the language they are learning. In addition, the Federal Government's Bradley Review of Higher Education reported that "knowledge of other cultures and their languages is an essential life skill for future graduates if they are to engage effectively in global professional practice" (Bradley, Noonan, Nugent, & Scales, 2008, p. 104).

As mentioned above, due to the growth of international trade and communication, globalisation and, consequently, the migration of cultures, people now live in a hybrid world where numerous different cultural practices have blended. That is why interest in understanding other cultures is increasing both in Australia and all over the world. However, scientific and technological progress not only brings the global villagers into constant contact with one another, but also creates more opportunities for conflict among them. Moreover, because of different social backgrounds, social systems, ways of thinking, norms of behaviour and customs, people have many difficulties and obstacles in understanding one another and communicating with one another. Foreign language learners, in particular, after learning all the grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation, in many cases still find it difficult to genuinely integrate and communicate with the people in their new

environment. Language is not merely a system of sounds, grammar, and meaning. It is social behaviour and, therefore, influenced and conditioned by social and cultural norms, rules, and values. Communication that lacks appropriate cultural content often results in humorous incidents, or, what is worse, is the source of serious miscommunication and misunderstanding. According to Kramersch (1993), culture is always in the background, right from day one, ready to unsettle language learners when they expect it least, making evident the limitations of their hard-won communicative competence, challenging their ability to make sense of the world around them.

This is also a problem that has troubled both teachers and learners. Increasingly there is the realisation that merely concentrating on structures and forms of the language are not enough to help people genuinely communicate in today's world. At present, it is a widely known fact that teaching and learning a foreign language cannot be reduced to the direct teaching of linguistic skills like phonology, morphology, vocabulary and syntax (Chlopek, 2008). Hinkel (1999) states that learning a foreign language is not simply mastering an object of academic study but is more appropriately focused on learning a means of communication. The contemporary models of communicative competence show that there is much more to learning a language, and they include the vital component of cultural knowledge and awareness (Bachman, 1990). In other words, to learn a language well usually requires knowing something about the culture of that language. If a foreign language learner is looking for communicative competence rather than just linguistic competence, then cultural awareness is imperative. Language learning and learning about target cultures cannot realistically be separated (Byram, 1989; Harrison, 1990; Kramersch, 1993; Robinson, 1988; Valdes, 1986).

As Stern (1983) proposes, the language learner should not only study the cultural context (language and culture) but should be made aware of the interaction between language and culture. According to Kramersch (1998), intercultural awareness, or the "fifth skill", is the ability to be aware of cultural relativity – following reading, writing, listening and speaking. In other words, the fifth skill is the ability to recognise, accept, and value the cultural differences of those around us, helping us to bridge communication barriers. The causes of many of the

conflicts going on all around the world can be attributed to cultural differences and intolerance brought about by cross-cultural ignorance. In such a context, second language learning and the sharing of cultures become all the more relevant. Effective communication and the interaction of language and culture are vital in fostering understanding among people throughout the world. There is the realisation that cultural awareness enables language proficiency (Rose, 2003).

### **1.3 Context of the study**

Within the University of Tasmania, the language program is relatively small, compared to those in other universities in Australia. Intensive language courses used to be offered across two university schools – the School of Asian Languages and Studies; and the School of English, Journalism and European Languages – both situated within the Faculty of Arts. Chinese, French, German, Indonesian, and Japanese are the languages being taught.

The Asian languages – Chinese, Indonesian and Japanese – include the teaching and learning of Asian studies; while the European languages – French and German – do not include the teaching and learning of European studies. Apart from these studies in modern languages, the School of History and Classics offers Latin and Ancient Greek by distance education.

In 2013, as a result of the implementation of a restructuring within the Faculty of Arts, University of Tasmania, the three previously-mentioned schools were merged with other schools within the Faculty, becoming the School of Humanities. Currently all the language programs are taught within the School of Humanities. Detailed information related to the context of this research study is further discussed in next chapter.

### **1.4 Aim and objectives of the study**

Strauss and Corbin (1998a) define a research question as the specific query to be addressed by this research that sets the parameters of the project and suggests the methods to be used for data gathering and analysis. While, a research objective is a “more specific description of what the various stages and/or components of the research being designed to achieve” (Bruce, Pope, & Stanistreet, 2008, p. 132).

The aim of this study was to investigate the perceptions of academic staff members and students towards the significance of intercultural awareness in foreign language teaching and learning in an Australian university context.

To fulfil this aim, the following research questions were raised:

- What does intercultural awareness mean to teaching staff and students in general?
- How do teaching staff and students interpret intercultural awareness in tertiary-level language education?
- What are the intercultural experiences of teaching staff and students?
- To what extent does intercultural awareness affect the teachers' language teaching and students' language learning?
- What are the most effective ways to develop intercultural communication skills?

In pursuit of the aim and research questions, the following research objectives were set out.

**Research objective 1:** to examine the views of academic teaching staff and university students towards the concept of intercultural awareness in general:

- How do teaching staff and students describe intercultural awareness as a concept?
- How do teaching staff and students perceive intercultural awareness?

**Research objective 2:** to investigate staff and students' perceptions towards the significance of intercultural awareness in foreign language teaching and learning in the Tasmanian tertiary educational context:

- What is the role of intercultural awareness in foreign language teaching and learning?
- What beliefs about cultural integration into language education do staff and students hold?

**Research objective 3:** to examine the intercultural experience of academic teaching staff and university students:

- What are teaching staff and students' intercultural experiences, personally and professionally?
- What is the influence of staff and students' intercultural experiences on foreign language teaching and learning?

**Research objective 4:** to compare beliefs and perceptions of academic teaching staff and students on intercultural awareness in foreign language teaching and learning:

- What are the identified similarities in beliefs and perceptions held by teaching staff and students?
- What are the identified differences in beliefs and perceptions held by teaching staff and students?

**Research objective 5:** to provide some suggestions or recommendations for enhancing intercultural awareness in foreign language teaching and learning in the context of University of Tasmania:

- What are the characteristics and features of current language programs?
- What are the challenges and obstacles of current teaching approaches?
- In what way can intercultural awareness be enhanced in language teaching and learning?
- How is a language program structured to maximise student learning?
- What are the expectations of teaching staff and students in relation to intercultural awareness in their language teaching and learning?

In other words, the researchers wish to explore some intercultural aspects of foreign language education within this particular university by investigating teachers' and students' personal and professional intercultural experiences relating to language learning as well as identify the factors that influence the way they teach and learn.

## **1.5 Research methods**

This study employed qualitative and quantitative research methods to achieve its objectives. The combination of these approaches was important in addressing the

aims of the study. In addition, it was important to use several data-gathering techniques to answer the questions posed by this research study. Using a variety of techniques provides different perspectives on a situation, thereby increasing what is known about it (Bouma, 2000). Morton-William (1998) argues that the choice of data collection techniques is dependent on the research topic, the objectives of the research, the subject matter, and the people who are to be studied. Questionnaires and interviews are often used together in mixed method studies investigating educational assessment (Brookhart & Durkin, 2003; Lai & Waltman, 2008). While questionnaires can provide evidence of patterns amongst large populations, qualitative interviews often gather more in-depth insights into participant attitudes, thoughts, and actions (Kendall, 2008).

Structured questionnaire and semi-structured interviews are the prime data-gathering methods employed in this study. Harris and Brown (2010) hold that structured questionnaires and semi-structured interviews are often used in mixed method studies to generate confirmatory results, despite differences in methods of data collection, analysis, and interpretation. On the one hand, interview is one of the most commonly employed qualitative methods in social research and provides in-depth information about a particular research issue or question. On the other hand, questionnaires are believed to be more objective, are more likely to provide confidentiality, and may elicit more truthful responses than would be obtained from a personal interview (Burns, 2000). In terms of this study, the questionnaire focused on teaching staff and students' perceptions of, and views on, the significance of intercultural awareness in foreign language teaching and learning. While the interview enabled the researcher to gain a deeper insight into participants' attitudes, and personal understandings, it also offered the opportunity for the researcher to explore in more depth the responses obtained from the questionnaire.

To adequately address the aims of the research, it was necessary to employ both qualitative and quantitative research methods. The use of a multiple-methods and a multiple-sources approach in this study was a form of triangulated research strategy. The methodological principles underpinning this research study were located within a mixed method research paradigm. Both qualitative and

quantitative methods were used to gather and analyse data, as appropriate. In essence, this study integrated qualitative and quantitative research methods to support the investigation, leading to a more complete understanding of the field of study.

This research study involved the participation of 290 students and 29 academic staff members within the Arts Faculty, across two campuses of the University of Tasmania. Data collection methods were in the form of questionnaire and semi-structured interview, which were conducted in relation to perceptions and views of the participants' towards the significance of intercultural awareness in foreign language teaching and learning. The data collection was organised into two phases: a quantitative phase (Phase 1) and a qualitative phase (Phase 2). During Phase 1, a 47-item questionnaire was distributed to teaching staff and a 48-item questionnaire distributed to students. Data gathered from this stage were analysed using statistical data analysis software: SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) version 20.0. During Phase 2, semi-structured interviews were organised with participants. The interview transcripts were analysed predominantly using thematic analysis, a constructive grounded theory approach and a three-step coding approach (Charmaz, 2006; Saldana, 2009; Sarantakos, 2005; Strauss & Corbin, 1998a). The qualitative data analysis was performed using NVivo software version 10.0.

### **1.5.1 Questionnaire**

Questionnaires are widely employed as devices to gather information about people's opinions, often asking respondents to indicate how strongly they agree or disagree with a statement given, and also sometimes posing several open-ended questions at the end giving respondents space in which to formulate their own replies.

There are some key qualities which questionnaire design should employ. A questionnaire (Bhattacharya, 2004) should be:

- reliable and valid;
- as short as possible;

- clearly worded and structured; and
- piloted on more than one occasion to make it as effective as possible.

The questionnaire employed during Phase 1 of this study adopted Likert's (1932) "Likert Scale" format, which is widely used by quantitative researchers for attitudinal measurement. As investigating the participants' perceptions and views was the aim of this study, a Likert Scale questionnaire was considered the most suitable data collection instrument. The questions and statements in the questionnaire were designed to collect four broad types of information:

- background information from each respondent about personal and demographic characteristics;
- information relating to respondents' perceptions on intercultural awareness in general;
- information relating to respondents' perceptions on intercultural awareness in foreign language teaching and learning; and
- information relating to respondents' individual intercultural experiences.

As is evident from the above discussion, questionnaire design is a complex process, which requires a lot of thought and preparation. Each questionnaire needs to be carefully designed, keeping the survey objective in mind.

Later, the responses to the questionnaire were analysed using SPSS. Median values were pursued to calculate respondents' degrees of agreement with the questions. The Kruskal-Wallis test was applied to seek factors that may affect the responses when respondents' ideas were divided on certain question items. Lastly, the Mann-Whitney U test was used to determine the differences in the views of staff and students toward the items.

### **1.5.2 Interview**

The primary objective of this research is to conduct research involving the participants' perceptions and intercultural experiences. Face-to-face interviews in these contexts are considered by the researcher to be a most appropriate means by which to gather data. It also appears to be the most appropriate means of

establishing rapport with the participants so as to facilitate feelings of interpersonal confidence and trust (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011).

However, it must be acknowledged that there are limitations associated with using the interview as one of the prime methodological tools. The interview is not a neutral tool as it is thought to produce situated understandings grounded in specific interactional episodes (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Possibly more than any other qualitative method, the interview is influenced by the personal characteristics of the interviewer, including age, race, class, ethnicity and gender.

So as to minimise these limitations, an in-depth, semi-structured approach to the interviews was proposed. The purpose of in-depth interviews is to understand the experiences of others and the meanings they attach to those experiences (Seidman, 1998). Minichiello, Aroni, Timewell and Alexander (1995) argue that in-depth interviews can be either unstructured or semi-structured. While unstructured interviews are informal in the sense that the interview resembles a conversation, although one related to a research issue, semi-structured interviews are developed around a list of issues or topics, such as a conceptual framework (Minichiello, et al., 1995). Semi-structured interviews focus on issues within the research area, but the approach used in questioning allows for flexibility of response. Another feature of semi-structured interviews is that they tend to follow an “interview guide” (Minichiello, et al., 1995). The interview guide provides flexibility as the interviewer remains free to build a conversation within a particular subject area, to word questions spontaneously, and to establish a conversational style – but with the focus on a particular subject that has been predetermined (Patton, 1990).

The data collection tool used during Phase 2 of this study was semi-structured interview. Interviews were guided by two sets of open-ended questions – one set of nine questions for staff and one set of ten questions for students. These questions were developed according to the responses and input of the participants during the Phase 1 of this study. In contrast to the questionnaire, these interview questions allowed the participants to express their ideas freely and discuss their perceptions and attitude towards the significance of intercultural awareness in foreign language teaching and learning. The researcher, also being the interviewer, followed up the questions and elaborated further on the participants’ input.

A constructivist grounded theory approach and thematic analysis were used to interpret the interview transcripts. This data analysis process was organised into three steps: initial, or open, coding, focused coding and theoretical coding.

Through an inductive process, the constructivist grounded theory approach identified the key patterns, codes and categories grounded in the data. It used a logical and flexible set of strategies (Strauss & Corbin, 1998a). This thematic analysis facilitated the construction of the dominant discourse presented in the participants' responses to the interview questions. The researcher then sought to find patterns and develop theories in relation to participants' views towards the significance of intercultural awareness in foreign language teaching and learning in the data analysis process.

## **1.6 Significance**

Given all the discussion above, questions arise such as: What does intercultural awareness mean to staff members and students in tertiary-level language education? When should intercultural awareness be introduced during the language teaching and learning process? To what extent, does intercultural awareness affect staff and students' language teaching and learning? What are the most effective ways to develop intercultural communication skills?

As mentioned earlier, globalisation is due mainly to the amazingly rapid expansion of science and technology in the areas of worldwide transportation and communication networks. Consequently, it seems apt and crucial for people to foster intercultural awareness in their interaction and communication with others. Nieto (2002, p. 40) asserts, "developing an intercultural perspective means learning how to think in more inclusive and expansive ways, reflecting on what we learn, and applying that learning to real situations."

This study will provide useful insights about the significance of intercultural awareness in foreign language teaching and learning in tertiary education settings. Such insights are important not only to enrich people's knowledge and life experience through studies in linguistics, but also to enable foreign language teaching and learning at tertiary level to be both intellectually worthwhile and economically viable. The study of intercultural awareness can awaken people's

cultural sensitivity, enable them to reflect on ethnocentrism, help the cultivation of an open attitude and the general development of a healthy personality. There is to date no specific study investigating the perspectives of staff members and students towards intercultural awareness in foreign language teaching and learning at this particular university and the challenges that need to be addressed in relation to this area in the future. Therefore, there is an opportunity for this study to contribute to the field (Burns, 2000).

### **1.7 Limitations of the study**

It is difficult to capture the complexities of intercultural research. This is particularly true of research into intercultural understandings of such issues as the role of intercultural awareness in foreign language teaching and learning. This point is expanded upon in the literature review chapter. The specific limitations of this study are as follows:

The data-gathering instruments were relatively unsophisticated and of a self-reporting nature. Nevertheless, this does not mean that the data are invalid or unreliable. Chapter 3 explains in detail the piloting of the research instruments and other procedures employed in order to increase reliability and validity.

The findings of this study are based on the views and perceptions of academic staff members and students at one university. Also, due to the small size of the language programs at this university, the number of participants was relatively small. Consequently, the respondents' attitudes were particular to one teaching and learning environment, and any attempt to generalise findings to other contexts, especially any other educational context, must be undertaken with great care. In other words, the capacity to generalise findings beyond the boundaries of this environment is limited. However, the number of students surveyed adds to the rigor of the study, and the foreign language teacher interviewees provided a fair representation of such teachers at the University of Tasmania.

### **1.8 Ethics of research**

Ethics is an important aspect of undertaking research (Plowright, 2011). The University of Tasmania takes very seriously the ethics of research involving

human participants. All staff and students of the University undertaking such research have to conform to a set of “ethical principles”, make these clear to those they are working with and ensure that they remain consistent with the principles throughout the research. An ethics protocol that covers issues such as confidentiality, right to withdraw, and feedback ought to be used for such purposes. Plowright (2011, p. 155) describes a number of important points that researchers should take into account during research. These include:

- informed consent;
- right of refusal to take part, without penalty;
- right to withdraw, without penalty;
- confidentiality and anonymity;
- deception; and
- security and safety from emotional or physical harm.

As study involves human subjects, the researcher needed to be aware of ethical issues. The subjects involved were academic staff and students at the University of Tasmania, whom are adults situated within a protected environment. Matters of privacy, informed content and confidentiality are essential ethical considerations. With the aim of ensuring confidentiality and security for all participants, it was decided by the researcher that the risks associated with this study were minimal and the main concerns were the confidentiality and security of the information collected from the subjects. Participants were invited to halt the interview if any discomfort should arise during the study. Participants were informed that all material would remain anonymous. No codes which would enable the identification of participants were used. All raw data will be kept secure at the Faculty of Education, on University of Tasmania premises, for a period of at least 5 years following the publication of any results from the study. The paper data will be destroyed by shredding after five years and the electronic data will be permanently deleted.

To conduct this research study, approval was received from the University of Tasmania’s Social Sciences Ethics Committee (Approval Number H11274) (see Appendix A). Appendices display all the relevant documentation, including the application approval and information sheet.

## **1.9 Outline to chapters**

Having provided an overview of the study, identified the aim and objectives, the significance, ethical considerations and some of the limitations of the study in this chapter, the following outline provides an overview for the remainder of the study.

Chapter 2 reviews the literature relating to the study and presents the current theories and studies relating to culture, communication, intercultural communication, intercultural teaching and learning and language education in Australia.

Chapter 3 outlines the methods that will be employed to fulfil the objectives of the study. It describes the research approaches, research methods, ethics of the research, participants and their recruitment to the study, the design of the study, data gathering and analyses, reliability, validity and triangulation, and the limitations of the study.

Chapter 4 reports the findings from the academic staff members' and students' surveys. The questionnaire data are analysed qualitatively and quantitatively, within the structure of the objectives, and provide insights into staff and student responses.

Chapter 5 reports on the qualitative findings from the interviews with academic staff members and students. The data are analysed to provide in-depth understandings based on staff and student responses.

Chapter 6 considers the results from Chapters 4 and 5, highlights the major findings from both the quantitative and qualitative data analyses, discusses contrasts and similarities between academic staff members and students, and makes recommendations for further investigations as a result of this study.

Chapter 7 revisits the research aims, in particular the exploration of the views of staff and students on the significance of intercultural awareness in foreign language teaching and learning. Findings presented within the data analysis chapters (Chapters 4 and 5) are revisited and summarised. Finally, the

researcher's interpretation of the findings, and suggestions and recommendations for further research, are presented.

### **1.10 Conclusion**

Following a brief introduction, this chapter has provided an overview of this study. The first deals with recent changes in the world, against a background of globalisation. The second describes the context of change in Australian tertiary education. The chapter provides a statement of the aims and objectives of the study, poses the research questions guiding the study, and outlines the research methods employed in this study, and describes the significance of the study. A brief statement describes the limitations of the study and ethical issues in undertaking the study. This chapter overview was provided in order to give readers general information about the presentation of this dissertation.

In the following chapter, a review of the literature is presented. The literature review will examine the theories and discussions related to intercultural awareness in foreign language teaching and learning. Firstly, it will give an introduction to the issues and challenges of intercultural studies. Secondly, some key terminologies, including cross-cultural, multicultural and intercultural awareness, second and foreign language teaching and learning, will be discussed. Thirdly, the literature on language learning theories and intercultural language learning will be investigated. Lastly, language education policies in the Australian context will be reviewed. The chapter will provide a background to the specific research area of this study, and lay a theoretical foundation for the design of the questions used within the research instruments.

## **2. Chapter 2 – Literature Review**

### **2.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter provided an overview of this study, which aims to investigate the significance of intercultural awareness in foreign language teaching and learning at the University of Tasmania.

This literature review chapter helps to develop a conceptual framework for the thesis, related to the research questions and associated objectives presented in Chapter One. To be specific, in this chapter, theories in relation to language learning, including the behaviourist theory, cognitive theory, communicative language teaching, technology in language teaching and learning, and culture study in language, will be discussed in-depth. Following this, the key area of intercultural studies, intercultural communication, will also be reviewed. In particular, major theories and concepts related to culture, communication and intercultural communication will be reviewed in order to lay a theoretical foundation to the research. Finally, issues and challenges within the discourse and context of this research study will be discussed.

### **2.2 Terminology**

For the purpose of clarity, it is necessary to review the key concepts that are relevant to this research study. It is essential to indicate where the researcher stands and explain her choices regarding the use of terms.

#### **2.2.1 Intercultural awareness**

In today's world, intercultural awareness has become a prerequisite for successful intercultural communication. Therefore, intercultural awareness is required if a foreign language learner is to achieve intercultural communication competence, which is now considered the major goal of foreign language learning (Han, 2013). According to Chen and Starosta (1996), intercultural awareness is one of the three interrelated components of intercultural communication competence. They see it as the minimum prerequisite for intercultural communication and interculturally competent individuals. Intercultural awareness refers to the understanding of

cultural conventions that affect thinking and behaviour, in which self-awareness and cultural awareness are the two main components.

Just as with the concept “culture”, for which a number of definitions and approaches are in use, the concept of cultural awareness is different depending on the conceptualisation of culture it is derived from and reasons for its development, be that a reflexive role, cognitive and affective, national or its relation to teaching English as a foreign language (Risager, 2000). “Cultural awareness is the term to describe sensitivity to the impact of culturally-induced behaviour on language use and communication” (Tomalin & Stempleski, 1993, p. 5). Baker (2012) argues that cultural awareness is “a conscious understanding of the role culture plays in language learning and communication (in both first and foreign language)” (p. 65). According to Tomalin and Stempleski (1993, p. 5), cultural awareness encompasses three qualities:

- awareness of one’s own culturally-induced behaviour;
- awareness of the culturally-induced behaviour of others; and
- ability to explain one’s own cultural standpoint.

Liddicoat (2002) also mentions that there are generally two views toward cultural awareness: the static and the dynamic. The static view does not recognise the link between language and culture. On the contrary, the dynamic view requires learners to have an understanding of their own culture and also actively engage in culture learning. In everyday language teaching and learning environments, language can be considered as a tool used for conveying meaning, and meaning is typically obtained by cultural awareness (Ogeyik, 2011).

In addition, Tomlinson and Musuhara (2004) point out the problem of cultural awareness and its significance for language teaching by making a distinction between “cultural knowledge which is information about a particular culture, and cultural awareness which is a perception of both our and others’ culture” (p. 6). They also claim that an increased cultural awareness helps learners broaden the mind, increase tolerance and achieve cultural empathy and sensitivity. “To be competent in intercultural communication, individuals must understand the social customs and social system of the host culture as understanding how a people think

and behave is essential for effective communication with them” (Jandt, 2007, p. 47).

However, cultural awareness is not always included in language teaching activities (Tomlinson & Musuhara, 2004, p. 11). For better understanding of others, it has been suggested that cultural awareness should evolve into intercultural awareness (Baker, 2012).

The use of the term “intercultural” reflects the view that foreign language learners have to gain insight into both their own and the foreign culture (Kramersch, 1993). A basic definition of the term “intercultural awareness” is given by Baker (2011):

Intercultural awareness is a conscious understanding of the role culturally based forms, practices, and frames of understanding can have in intercultural communication, and an ability to put these conceptions into practice in a flexible and context specific manner in real time communication. (p. 198)

Furthermore, Kramersch (1999) defines it as a place of “thirdness” (a third place or a third culture), that is, a space between learners’ own culture (C1) and the target culture (C2) in which learners can create their own understanding. She strongly advises teachers and learners to create a third place in their language classroom. Moreover, Lo Bianco, Liddicoat, and Crozet’s (1999) “third place” concept has a similar aim to “thirdness.” Liddicoat (2008) later states that the third place is a place of accommodation between C1 and C2 which leads to a new cultural positioning, created and negotiated in response to cultures. Language teaching that is truly intercultural “prepares language learners to know how to negotiate comfortable third places between the self and the other” (Lo Bianco, et al., 1999, p. 1). Intercultural learning must become a critical engagement with cultural practices embedded within and integrated with language in use (Crozet & Liddicoat, 2000).

Chen and Starosta (1996) even divide intercultural awareness into three levels: awareness of superficial cultural traits; awareness of significant and subtle cultural traits that contrast markedly with ours; and awareness of how another culture feels from the insider’s perspective. The developmental levels show that intercultural

awareness is a learning process by which we become aware of our own cognitive growth, learning, and change regarding a set of cultural situations and cultural principles stemming from intercultural communication.

Based on the discussion above, in this study, the researcher chose the term intercultural awareness as the focus of the study because she felt it most successfully encompassed the qualities this research study was designed to develop.

### **2.2.2 Second language and foreign language**

In language teaching such terms as “second language” and “foreign language” have been used interchangeably (Valdes, 1986). In pedagogy and sociolinguistics, a distinction is often made between them. Richards and Schmidt (2010) define foreign language as follows:

A “foreign language” as a language which is not the native language of large numbers of people in a particular country or region, is not used as a medium of instruction in schools and is not widely used as a medium of communication in government, media, etc. Foreign languages are typically taught as school subjects for the purpose of communicating with foreigners or for reading printed materials in the language. (pp. 224-225)

Richards and Schmidt (2010) also provide the definition of “second language” as a language that “plays a major role in a particular country or region though it may not be the first language of many people who use it” (p. 514). Stern (1983) recognises that in contrasting the terms second language and foreign language:

There is consensus that a necessary distinction is to be made between a non-native language learnt and used within one country to which the term “second language” has been applied, and a non-native language learnt and used with reference to a speech community *outside* national or territorial boundaries to which the term “foreign language” is commonly given. (p. 16)

Given these plausible common sense definitions for the two key notions of the topic of this study, it is of great importance to keep them in mind. In addition, and taking the Australian context into consideration, it might be acceptable or more appropriate to deem all the languages offered at the University of Tasmania foreign languages. Consequently, the terms “foreign language” and “intercultural awareness” will be used consistently throughout the thesis to represent the university discourse.

### **2.3 Language teaching and learning theory**

Before looking at different theories of language learning, it is important to review the definitions of language, understanding that these have changed over time. According to Finocchiaro (1974, p. 3), “language is a system of arbitrary, verbal symbols which permit all people in a given culture, or other people who have learnt the system of that culture, to communicate or interact.” Similarly, Emmitt, Komesaroff and Pollock (2006) define language as “a system of arbitrary signs agreed to by a community of users, transmitted and received for a specific purpose, in relation to the shared world of the users” (p. 13). Moreover, another definition of language proposed by Jandt (2007) is that language “is a set of symbols shared by a community to communicate meaning and experience” (p. 123).

Based on the definitions above, it can be seen that language is a cultural symbol that preserves and transmits culture to the coming generations, and is also a means of systematic communication by vocal symbols. It is worth noting that culture and language are so closely interconnected and interdependent that their independent survival is almost impossible. Language is rooted in culture and culture is reflected and passed on by language from one generation to the next (Emmitt & Pollock, 1997). Culture and language are therefore most intimately (and obviously) interrelated on the levels of semantics, where the vocabulary of a language reflects the culture shared by its speakers (House, 2007). Liddicoat (2008) asserts that language learning is a deep, conceptual activity that involves explicit discussion and analysis of language, culture and learning—it is a process of dialogue and reflection based on language and the culture that is embedded in it and communicated through it.

Asia Society (2013b) echoes this from a different perspective: language teaching is fundamentally about much more than learning how to introduce oneself, chat about the weather, or ask what time it is. At its core, effective language teaching provides students with the necessary tools to recognise and apply patterns in language and culture, and creates a caring learning environment in which students are asked constantly to make meaning for themselves. Further relevant literature regarding language and culture will be explored in the following section.

### **2.3.1 Behaviourist theory and cognitive theory**

Skinner (1957) suggests that language is also a form of behaviour. Language can be learned in the same way as an animal is trained to respond to stimuli. A behaviourist approach to foreign language learning focuses on imitation, practice, encouragement and habit formation entails the accumulation of atomised bits of knowledge that are sequenced and ordered hierarchically (Scarino & Liddicoat, 2009).

On the contrary, Chomsky (1959) argues that language is not a form of behaviour, but, rather, that it is an intricate rule-based system, and that a large part of language acquisition is the learning of this system. Cognitive theories of language acquisition focus more on the learner's capacity to build up the knowledge system or architecture over time and, through practice, language becomes automatically accessible in reception and production (Scarino & Liddicoat, 2009). This concurs with Piaget's (1953) notion that cognitive development is a precursor for language. However, the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis (Sapir, 1966; Whorf, 1956) appears to contradict with this view; they assert that language determined thought.

In addition, language also reflects the sociocultural organisation of a community of speakers (Finocchiaro, 1974). The word "sociocultural" appears frequently within the literature relating to language and culture, and the central idea of sociocultural theory is that development depends on interaction with others and the world around us (Vygotsky, 1987).

### 2.3.2 Communicative language teaching

Communicative language teaching (CLT), the dominant orientation of contemporary foreign language education (Macaro, 1997), is an approach to foreign or second language teaching that emphasises communicative competence as the goal of language learning. The aim of this approach is to “acquire the necessary skills to communicate in socially and culturally appropriate ways” (Aguilar, 2009, p. 247). Generally, the underlying theoretical concept of CLT is communicative competence, which refers to the ability for language learners to use socially, contextually and culturally appropriate language in communicative contexts (Savignon, 1997).

The term “communicative competence” was first used by Hymes in deliberate contrast to Chomsky’s “linguistic competence” (Stern, 1983). Communicative competence is concerned with activities, which create realistic situations for language work. It is a student-centred approach and students learn language behaviour. Its teaching techniques are flexible enough to attain this objective.

Such concepts as “communicative” or “functional” language teaching or “communicative competence” suggest that language teaching recognises a social, interpersonal, and cultural dimension and attributes to it just as much importance as to the grammatical or phonological aspect (Stern, 1983). The sociolinguistic emphasis is expressed by contrasting a “communicative” or “functional” approach with “linguistic”, “grammatical”, “structural”, or “formal” approaches to language teaching (Stern, 1983). For the sake of simplicity and directness, Brown (2000) offers the following four interconnected characteristics, as a definition of communicative language teaching:

- Classroom goals are focused on all of the components of communicative competence and not restricted to grammatical or linguistic competence.
  - Language techniques are designed to engage learners in the pragmatic, authentic, functional use of language for meaningful purposes.
- Organizational language forms are not the central focus but rather aspects of language that enable the learner to accomplish those purposes.

- Fluency and accuracy are seen as complementary principles underlying communicative techniques. At times fluency may have to take on more importance than accuracy in order to keep learners meaningfully engaged in language use.
- In the communicative classroom, students ultimately have to use the language, productively and receptively, in unrehearsed contexts. (p. 266)

The call for adoption of communicative language teaching was not accidental. The teaching of grammar has been a major topic of debate since the introduction of CLT. The problem was the existing unsatisfactory teaching results of the traditional grammar-oriented method. As Johnson and Morrow (1981) state, new movements often begin as reactions to old ones: their origins lie in a discontent with an existing state of affairs. The Grammar Translation Method fails to inculcate communication skills in students. The meaning of the target language is made clear by translating it into the student's native language. But it is almost impossible to translate completely every word or phrase from one language to another language. In real-life teaching situations, this is not always the case. In translating a foreign language, an awareness of the culture of the target language needs to be carefully considered. Otherwise, the potential for cross-cultural communication problems arises from mutual lack of awareness of culturally-salient but inherently untranslatable words or phrases; cultural implications are difficult to render from one language to another. To avoid "lost in translation" issues, effective inter-cultural communication is of great importance to the wider community.

However, translation is still an important tool in foreign language learning. In fact, translation has been favoured for teaching language and literature since early last century (Beichman, 1983; Cook-Sather, 2003; Gillis, 1960; Hall, 1952; Irvin, 1942; Morgan, 1917; Virtue & Baklanoff, 1952; Woolsey, 1974). Translation theorists have noted an interwoven relationship between language and culture, maintaining that translation is a process of intercultural exchange (Kloepfer & Shaw, 1981; Kramersch, 1998; Lotman & Uspensky, 1978; Pena, 2007; Pennycook, 2007). Hermans (1999) believes translation should be recognised as a cultural practice. Gerding-Salas (2000) suggests that the main aim of translation is to serve

as a cross-cultural bilingual communication vehicle among people of different tongues and cultures. Therefore, it could be concluded that both language and culture should be highly regarded in the act of translation. The cultural connotation of concepts under translation are thus of significance, as are lexical and structural items. As Lotman and Uspensky (1978) state, no language can exist unless it is steeped in the context of culture, and no culture can exist which does not have at its centre the structure of natural language. Being the primary means of human communication, language is bound up with culture in multiple and complex ways. As Kramsch (1998) explains, language expresses cultural reality, embodies cultural reality and symbolises cultural reality.

After the discussion above, the following section is about various language teaching approaches. Littlewood (1981) argues that a communicative approach opens up a wider perspective on language. In particular, it makes language educators consider language not only in terms of its structures (grammar and vocabulary), but also in terms of the communicative functions that it performs. From this perspective, the goal of foreign language teaching can be defined in the following terms: to extend the range of communication situations in which learners can perform with focus on meaning, without being hindered by the attention they must pay to linguistic form.

The communicative approach creates a situation for the use of real world language in a variety of sociocultural situations in which features of pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar and culture are selected and graded according to their priority in actual communication. It stresses the use of grammatically and semantically appropriate language in particular situations (Finocchiaro, 1974).

From the microscopic angle, society needs personnel who have mastered foreign languages. In the twenty-first century, human beings will advance with “giant strides” into a brand new era of intellectual economy. At that point, students in the future will need to have solid professional knowledge, and the ability to use foreign languages for communication exchanges in their daily lives.

Foreign languages are not only a means of communication, information transmission and emotional expression, but also tools for learning advanced

technology. People who wish to learn a foreign language may have any one of a number of reasons for doing so. In reality it is highly unlikely for people to become fluent in a language without extensive periods of some form of total language immersion. Total immersion is a method of studying languages in which students live in almost complete absence of mother tongues. The researcher knows from personal experience the effectiveness of this method.

### **2.3.3 Technology in language teaching and learning**

Knowledge and information today have become some of the most important key factors to a nation's success in terms of productivity, competitiveness and economic prosperity. In order for nations to be prepared for the knowledge-based and information-based economy, governments almost all over the world are now developing and modifying strategies to increase access to, and quality of, education. Education must keep pace with the rapidly changing world if nations wish to remain competitive in the global context.

In the past decade, the ongoing, fast-growing technological advancements, especially in information and communications technology (ICT), have brought significant improvements to numerous areas, including and not limited to, business, manufacturing, medical, military, research and education. ICT has now become an integral part of people's lives and is no longer a luxurious item, but a necessity. ICT components, which include the Internet, wireless communications technology, multimedia and computers, can provide users worldwide with almost unlimited access to all kinds of information.

Similarly, rapid evolution of communication technologies has changed language pedagogy and language use, enabling new forms of discourse, new forms of authorship, and new ways to create and participate in communities (Richards, 2006). The Internet, particularly, has become a useful tool for communication, and an important venue for experiencing different cultures (Park & Son, 2009). Along with the impact of the Internet worldwide, the extensive use of computers and the adoption of more sophisticated computer-based technologies in language learning at universities, have had a critical influence on educational environments. Today this includes Internet-based technologies including email, chat rooms,

online dictionaries, language websites, blogs and wikis, and interactive virtual reality (Morgan & Throssell, 2012). Especially, it is the Web 2.0 technologies, such as blogs, wikis, social networking sites and virtual reality environments, which have the most influence in language learning today and into the future (Harrison & Thoma, 2009). Motteram and Sharma (2009) point out that the production of information via Web 2.0 technologies links tool developers with the users who create the content, and that this communication makes the prospect of language acquisition more successful, as language can then be tried out in meaningful ways.

Specifically speaking, there are various computer technologies used within the field of education in order to improve teachers' productivity and students' learning outcomes. Some of the commonly used technological approaches in language teaching and learning are mentioned in this section, including computer assisted language learning (CALL); technology-enhanced language learning (TELL); computer-mediated communication (CMC); mobile-assisted language learning (MALL); language learning in virtual worlds, such as the 3D world of Second Life; and social media language learning. In particular, blogs, wikis and 3D virtual worlds provide opportunities for students to participate in an "international language community that resembles real world experiences without leaving [their] own home or classroom" (Motteram & Sharma, 2009, p. 85). According to Jung (2002), interactive virtual reality offers the learner further opportunities to practise language skills in realistic communication settings. For instance, activities such as visiting a restaurant or attending a job interview could involve students interacting with each other and learning the language in an autonomous way through which they can have control over the experience and receive instant feedback (Jung, 2002). However, Morgan and Throssell (2012) suggest that learning outcomes attributed to a range of Internet-based language learning technologies still need to be examined.

Over the years, the Australian government has provided every school with multimedia computers, software programs and high-speed broadband Internet connections (via the National Broadband Network) to cope with an information technology society and to integrate ICT into everyday educational practices. New

technologies, especially in ICT, have brought significant improvements to economic productivity in countries all around the world. Further research indicates that ICT might provide similar productive contributions to the education sector, such as increasing teacher's productivity and most importantly, improving students' learning outcomes (Pacific Policy Research Center, 2010). However, some studies have shown that ICT does not actually improve students' learning and the effectiveness of ICT in education still remains debatable (Houcine, 2011). Technology offers us a means by which to make the unfamiliar familiar, to reframe and rethink our conceptions of language, communication, and society. It is through this process of analysis and reflection that we can best decide how we can and should use technology in language teaching and learning (Richards, 2006). There is consensus in research that it is not technology per se that affects the learning of language and culture but the particular uses of technology (Richards, 2006). The use of technology depends on language teachers' attitudes and interpretation of technology as well as their knowledge background. According to Redmond, Albion and Maroulis (2005), teachers' personal backgrounds such as personal confidence, interests in using ICT and willingness to try something different are significant factors that might promote ICT integration in the classroom.

In this global context, the Internet combined with a variety of technological programs, is on its way to restructuring the concept of the language classroom and the roles of the learner and the teacher in foreign language learning and teaching around the world. As a result, digital media literacy continues its rise in importance as a key skill in every discipline and profession (The New Media Consortium & Griffith University, 2012). While computers and the Internet provide new possibilities to explore language teaching and learning methods, the appropriate integration of Internet-connected computers into the language curriculum is a key issue to consider when examining the effective use of computer technologies for educational purposes in Australia.

However, most language learners have difficulty developing their communicative competence beyond the classroom, mainly because they do not have a supportive learning environment within which they can hear and speak for communicative

purposes. Therefore, some special efforts are needed to help students expand their language learning experiences and practise the target language outside the classroom. Previous research indicates that computer mediated language learning can facilitate communication, enhance students' motivation, facilitate cross-cultural awareness, and improve writing skills (Yang & Chen, 2006). The design of technology-enhanced language materials generally takes into consideration principles of language pedagogy and methodology, which may be derived from different learning theories, such as the aforementioned behaviourist and cognitive theories. Issues like the adoption of authentic teaching materials, web-based activities, blended learning, as well as the challenges of teaching the digital generation (digital natives and digital immigrants) (Prensky, 2001) will be explored in more detail with regard to the current research study in the discussion and conclusion chapters.

## **2.4 Culture study in language**

Language is an important element in human culture. The culture in which a person lives greatly influences the attitudes, values, ideas, and beliefs of the person; hence there is the need to understand every aspect of one's culture for evaluative, preservative and globalisation purpose (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Therefore, language—as the most important means of communicating, transmitting information and providing human bonding—has an exceptionally important position inside any culture (House, 2007). Language learning entails not only linguistic knowledge, but also the awareness of the importance of the context and motives behind communication. Learning a new language is a complex process, so is language teaching. Teaching any language necessarily involves teaching culture, as culture shapes the way language is structured and used (Dellit, 2005). To further stress this point, Valdes (1986) states that it is virtually impossible to teach a language without teaching cultural content.

In addition, Lê, Lê and Short (2009) maintain that it is not possible to separate language from its culture and that it is therefore necessary to combine the teaching of a language with the culture of the target language. There is no question that the successful integration of culture and language teaching can contribute significantly to general humanistic knowledge, that language ability and cultural

sensitivity can play a vital role in the security, defence, and economic well-being of this country, and that global understanding ought to be a mandatory component of basic education (Galloway 1985; Lafayette & Strasheim 1981, cited in Hadley, 2000).

In most cases in language learning, there was little explicit connection between the classroom and the world outside it. Therefore, language teaching and learning require an understanding of the fundamental relationship between language and culture. As Malinowski (cited in Stern, 1983) argues, the study of any language spoken by a people who live under conditions different from our own and possess a different culture must be carried out in conjunction with a study of their culture and of their environment. Where the language is learnt as a foreign language the target community is usually physically and psychologically distant, for example when Mandarin Chinese is learnt in Australia or German in America. Culture teaching provides the context without which the language remains an empty code and lacks credibility from the learner's perspective (Stern, 1992).

Englebert (2004) suggests that to teach a foreign language is also to teach a foreign culture, and it is important to be sensitive to the fact that our students, our colleagues, our administrators, and, if we live abroad, our neighbours, do not share all of our cultural paradigms. Studies of the role of culture in language and language teaching suggest that every attempt to communicate with the speaker of another language is a cultural act. The basis of what is termed intercultural language teaching and learning involves recognition that culture is fundamental to the way we speak, write, listen and read (Crozet & Liddicoat, 2008). Intercultural studies are becoming increasingly more important in the global environment. Ho (2009) argues that intercultural language learning is a stance on language teaching and learning that emphasises the interdependence of language and culture and the importance of intercultural understanding as a goal of language education. It is increasingly being promoted as a way to develop learners' ability to negotiate meanings across languages and cultures and prepare them for living in a multicultural world. No longer is linguistic proficiency the sole aim of teaching and learning in the language classroom: that is, at the same time as students learn the foreign language they gain a set of intercultural understandings which allow

them to explore why language is as it is, and how processes of language and culture impact on meaning making (Moloney & Harbon, 2010).

It has been widely recognised that language is the main medium through which culture is expressed. It can be stated that a language is a part of culture and a culture is a part of a language. As Byram and Morgan (1994) claim, it is axiomatic that cultural learning has to take place as an integral part of language learning, and vice versa. Culture and language seem to be inextricably entwined (Charmaz, 2006); the two are intricately interwoven so that one cannot separate the two without losing the significance of either language or culture (Brown, 2000).

Moreover, Stern (1983) states that “the language learner should not only study the cultural context (‘language AND culture’) but that he should be made aware of the interaction between language and culture (‘language IN culture’, ‘culture IN language’)” (p. 206). Language itself is defined by a culture. Language is the key or the “ticket” to the culture, with which students can enter the culture and participate within it (Curtain & Dahlberg, 2004). One cannot be competent in language if one does not also understand the culture that has shaped and informed it. In other words, one cannot learn a language if one does not have an awareness of its attendant culture, and how that culture relates to one’s own first language/culture. Therefore, it is not only essential to have cultural awareness, but also intercultural awareness. In conclusion, intercultural awareness, as a fundamental feature of language and an integral part of language learning, is important at all levels.

Equally important, since language reflects the culture of speakers, students should be given insights into the habits, customs, and values and the ways in which these are similar to or different from their own. It is imperative, however, that learners appreciate that all people have culture and there are no good or bad cultures (Finocchiaro, 1974). The learners studying foreign languages should not only be equipped with the languages themselves but also their cultures. Brembeck (1977) suggests that to know another’s language and not his culture is a very good way to make a fluent fool of oneself. As students progress through a foreign language program, it is expected that they will increase their awareness of the culture or cultures’ characteristic of the speakers of the language under study. This

broadened awareness may touch on all aspects of culture: the people's way of life as well as the geographic, historical, economic, artistic, and scientific aspects of the target society (Valdes, 1986).

For the purpose of this study, therefore, it was important to consider the strong link between language and culture and highlight the role of discourse in expressing cultural values and norms through language. Byram (1989) places "cultural studies" at the core of foreign language learning and proposes a model of four related parts, namely language learning, language awareness, cultural experience, and cultural awareness.

In recent years, a great volume of literature has received a lot of attention on culture study in language. Regarding the reason teaching culture in language is important, researchers provide opinions from different perspectives. It is worth mentioning that Chastain (1988) describes three reasons for the culture component being so crucial in language learning:

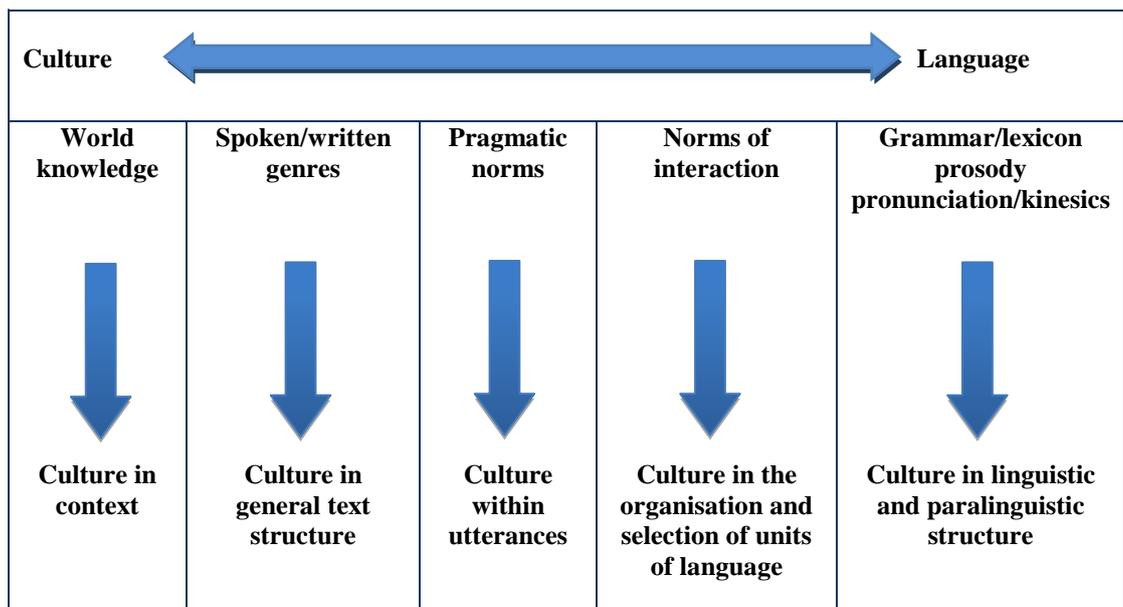
- First, language and culture are inseparably bound; therefore, complete comprehension during any type of intercultural communication depends upon the participants' awareness of the social and cultural significance of the words and expressions employed;
- Another fundamental reason for the inclusion of culture is intercultural understanding itself. International understanding is one of the basic goals of education in the modern, interdependent world community of nations;
- The third principle reason for stressing culture in language classes relates to the students. On the one hand, students are extremely interested in the people who speak the language they are studying. On the other hand, it is probable they know very little about the basic aspects of their own culture.  
(p. 298)

Significantly, too, the needs of learners are considered to be the most important factors when deciding what to teach. According to Van Els (1983), there are three needs of foreign languages learners:

- communicative abilities in a foreign language;

- desirable goals closely linked to language competence, but for which such competence is not a prerequisite, like familiarity with another people's literature or culture;
- particular skills or areas of knowledge not necessarily linked to foreign language competence, like the development of students' intellectual powers.

As Stern (1992) reiterates, “one of the most important aims of culture teaching is to help the learner gain an understanding of the native speaker’s perspective” (p. 216). “Even though not all teachers are native speakers, all teachers are the culture bearers, the representatives of the culture in the classroom” (Curtain & Dahlberg, 2004, p. 33). Figure 2.1 shows how language and culture articulate and that the interconnection of language and culture is important for language learning:



*Figure 2.1* Points of articulation between culture and language-Adapted from Liddicoat et al. (2003, p. 9).

As Liddicoat et al. (2003) also claim, language and culture interact with each other in a way that connects culture to all levels of language use and structures; that is, there is no level of language which is independent of culture. However, the sheer vastness of culture makes it impossible to tell learners everything they need to know about the target culture. The strategies regarding this issue will be further explored in the discussion chapter.

## **2.5 Intercultural communication**

This section relates to the area of intercultural studies, in which several key elements, such as culture, communication, intercultural communication and intercultural competence, will be reviewed. Before exploring the concept of intercultural communication, it is important to understand all the important elements within such a complicated concept. First of all, the concept “components and characteristics of culture” will be analysed. Then, the concept “components of communication” will be discussed. Following this, the relationship between culture and communication will be explored. Finally, other relevant elements of intercultural communication will be reviewed.

### **2.5.1 Culture**

#### ***2.5.1.1 Definition of culture***

It is essential to learn the components and characteristics of culture to understand intercultural communication. The concept of “culture” includes diverse meanings, such as ancient culture and modern culture, tea culture and clothing culture, Asian culture and European culture, national culture, youth culture, campus culture and company culture. The word *culture* has been used to label almost every aspect of human society. Like communication, culture is difficult to define (Neuliep, 2006). While many researchers from different fields have attempted to provide an adequate definition of culture, in this chapter the emphasis will be on those who have worked mostly with intercultural communicative competence and language teaching.

Kramsch (1998) describes culture as “membership in a discourse community that shares a common social space and history, and common imaginings” (p. 10).

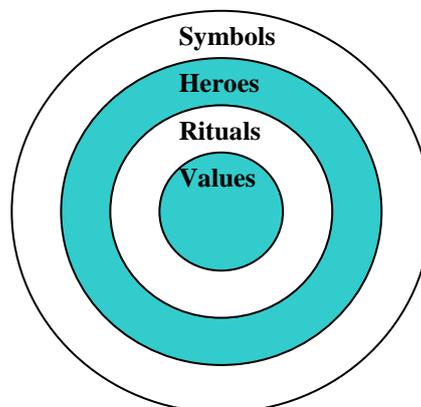
Liddicoat, Papademetre, Scarino and Kohler (2003) define culture as:

A complex system of concepts, attitudes, values, beliefs, conventions, behaviours, practices, rituals, and lifestyles of the people who make up a cultural group, as well as the artefacts they produce and the institution they create. (p. 45)

Brooks (1960) makes a distinction between “Culture” with a capital “C”- art, music, literature, politics and so on- and “culture” with a small “c”- the behavioural patterns and lifestyles of everyday people. According to Hall (1976):

Culture is man’s medium; there is not one aspect of human life that is not touched and altered by culture. This means personality, how people express themselves (including shows of emotion), the way they think, how they move, how problems are solved, how their cities are planned and laid out, how transportation systems function and are organised, as well as how economic and government system are put together and function. (p. 14)

Another approach is taken by Hofstede (1994), who refers to the patterns of thinking, feeling and potentially acting, learned through a lifetime as *mental programs* and similar to the way computers work, cultural input functions *software of the mind* (see Figure 2.2). It can be seen that symbols, heroes and rituals are visible features of culture, while values are learned unconsciously, for example, social prejudice and expression of emotions. According to Hofstede (1994), most of the programming takes place in early childhood within the family, but it continues in one’s social environment, in school and in the workplace. Since the programming is at least partly shared with people who live or have lived within the same environment, culture is a collective phenomenon. Therefore, it is probably no exaggeration to say that culture plays a dominant role in human life.



*Figure 2.2 Software of the mind*

However, when it comes to the meanings of culture, it is not easy to provide a satisfactory definition. Fennes and Hapgood (1997) state that “there are many ways of defining the concept of culture, all of which face the same dilemma: we are trying to reflect on something we are part of.” (p. 13)

Cultures can be classified into different types, if viewed from different perspectives. As is the case with communication, many definitions have been suggested for culture. Hall (1959) redefines it in such a way, for anthropologists, culture has long stood for the way of life of a people, for the sum of their learned behaviour patterns, attitudes, and material things. According to Patterson (1975), culture is an identifiable complex of meanings, symbols, values and norms that are shared consciously by a group of people. Another concept of culture was put forward by Brown (1984), who suggested that a culture is a collection of beliefs, habits, living patterns, and behaviours which are held more or less in common by people who occupy particular geographic areas.

As mentioned earlier, Hofstede (1994) defines culture as “the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another” (p. 5). Later, a simple definition was offered by Ferraro (1995), who defines culture as everything that people have, think, and do as members of a society. Spencer-Oatey (2000) extends the concept of culture, suggesting that “culture is fuzzy attitudes, beliefs, behavioural norms, and basic assumptions and values that are shared by a group of people, and that influence each other’s behaviour and his/her interpretations of the ‘meaning’ of other people’s behaviour” (p. 4). The interpretative role of culture, as introduced by Spencer-Oatey (2000), is especially crucial when describing intercultural communication in different cultural contexts.

The reason so many definitions have been suggested is that culture is an extremely complicated phenomenon. However, it is hard to find a succinct definition of culture, because it consists of everything in social organisation, such as routines, rituals, values, beliefs, myths, legends, people, language, history and tradition. Culture is complex and multi-dimensional. As Hall (1976, p. 115) points out, “the reason one cannot get into another culture by applying the ‘let’s-fit-the-

pieces-together’ process is the total complexity of any culture.” Moreover, Sternberg and Grigorenko (2004) state:

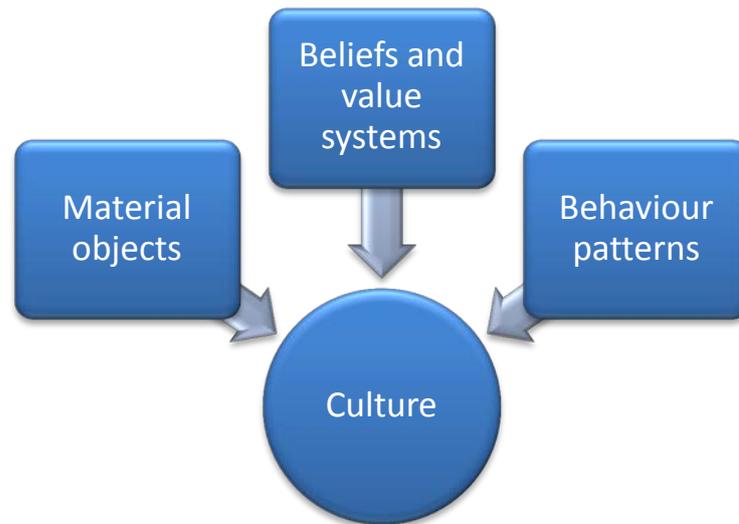
Culture is so pervasive and all-encompassing that it shapes every part of life, from the kind of food and drink. Culture is, at some levels, an intentional process of improving human life through concerted, prescribed interactions with the natural and the social environment. (p. 98–99)

However, some important concepts of culture should be learned from their definitions as follows (Hu, 1999):

- Culture is created by humans in the course of generations through group striving. It is social heritage.
- Culture includes both beliefs, values, customs, knowledge and the like, as well as artefacts.
- Culture is a guideline to people’s behaviours, providing solutions to problems.
- Culture is not innate, but learned.
- Values are at the core of culture.

### ***2.5.1.2 Components and characteristics of culture***

As mentioned above, the definition offers by Ferraro (1995) covers all of the three components of culture: material objects, beliefs and value system, and behaviour patterns (see Figure 2.3). According to Ferraro, what people “have” refers to their material possessions; everything that people “think” refers to what people have in their mind, such as ideas, values, attitudes; what people “do” refers to their behaviour patterns. It should be noted that some cultural components—such as beliefs, values and attitudes—are very important for understanding intercultural communication. Difficulties arise in intercultural communication when beliefs, values and attitudes come into conflict and clash with each other.



*Figure 2.3 Components of culture*

2.5.1.2.1 Culture is learned behaviour (Goodacre & Follers, 1987; Hall, 1976; Lustig & Koester, 1993; Tubbs & Moss, 1994)

It is true that culture is passed down from previous generations; however, it is acquired through the process of learning and interacting with the individual's environment. According to Brown (1984), "culture is seen as part of the normal environment for humans. It provides the context in which human genes are passed on" (p. 97). People learn to act, feel, think and believe what their culture considers proper. Everything a person experiences is part of his or her culture. It is not hereditarily determined; it is non-instinctive and learned.

Despite many differences in detail, anthropologists agree on at least three characteristics of culture. As Hall (1976) mentions, "it is not innate, but learned; the various facets of culture are interrelated—you touch a culture in one place and everything else is affected; it is shared and in effect defines the boundaries of different groups." (pp. 13-14)

2.5.1.2.2 Culture is shared among its members (Hall, 1976; Lustig & Koester, 1993; Robinson, 1985; Tubbs & Moss, 1994)

Robinson (1985) points out, "culture is something which is shared and can be observed" (p. 8). Tubbs and Moss (1994) also propose that "culture is a way of life developed and shared by a group of people and passed down from generation

to generation” (p. 421). It is true that the learned cultural patterns are not the property of any individual but are shared by the members of the same group or society. It is assumed that people from the same culture share the same patterns of living: the same set of symbols used for communication, the same rules of speaking, the same idea about what can be eaten as food and what cannot, the same belief about nature and human beings. Within the same system, individuals can easily understand one another and adjust themselves to their surroundings.

#### 2.5.1.2.3 Culture is relational (Hall, 1976; Robinson, 1985)

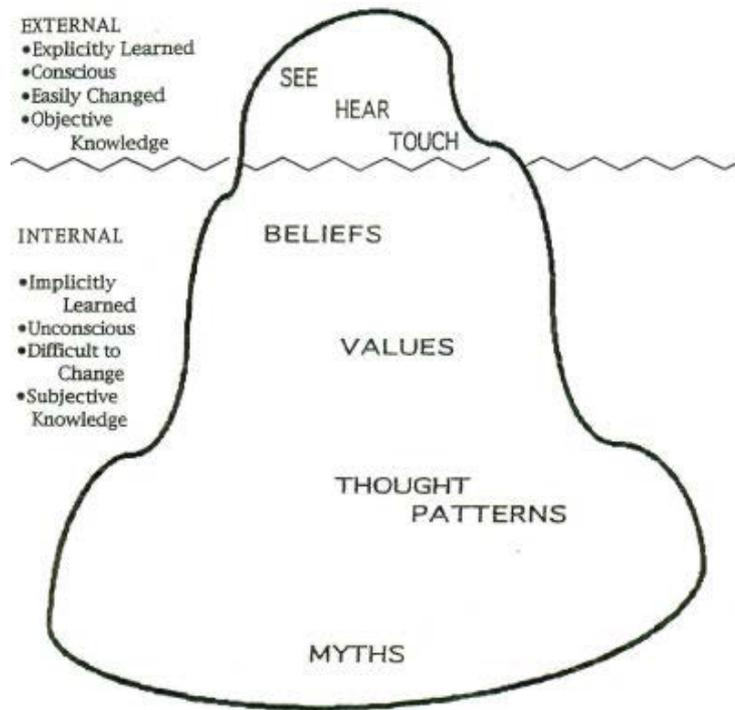
Any culture is an integrated entity and all the components of culture are interrelated. The change of one aspect of culture will certainly bring about changes in other aspects as well. For example, any invention and progress of mankind will lead to changes in people’s ideas, way of life, and mode of behaviour. These changes often take place on the superficial levels of a culture, while the deep structures, that are perceptions, values and beliefs, are likely to change slowly. Therefore, in the study of culture, researchers should also take a relational approach. In other words, people should study one aspect of culture in relation to other aspects. Only in this way can a true understanding of a culture and its people be gained.

There are other characteristics of culture that most directly affect communication, such as being invisible, dynamic and ethnocentric. Members of a culture learn the perceptions, rules, and behaviours of the membership, without being aware of them.

#### 2.5.1.2.4 Culture is usually acquired unconsciously (Hall, 1959)

As mentioned earlier, culture influences human beings from the very day they are born, but people are rarely conscious of many of the cultural messages they are receiving. The unconsciousness of cultural behaviour in both its acquisition and expression is an important dimension for intercultural communication, because it presents hidden barriers. Weaver’s (1993) cultural iceberg shows that a large proportion of our own culturally-shaped knowledge is invisible and mostly subconsciously applied in our everyday interactions (see Figure 2.4). As Hall (1959) claims, “culture controls behaviour in deep and persisting ways, many of

which are out of awareness and therefore beyond conscious control of the individual.” (p. 48)



*Figure 2.4 The cultural iceberg (Weaver, 1993)*

2.5.1.2.5 Culture is dynamic (Fennes & Hapgood, 1997; Goodacre & Follers, 1987; Robinson, 1985; Stier, 2004)

According to Stier (2004), just like people change, cultures do not remain static, but are in constant flux. Fennes and Hapgood (1997) also believe “culture is not static but dynamic and changing continuously. It is in the process of permanent change, as is society” (p. 14). It is believed that culture evolved to serve the basic human need of laying out a predictable world in which people are firmly grounded. Thus it enables them to make sense of their surroundings. In addition, Cowan, Dembour and Wilson (2001) point out that “culture is now understood as historically produced rather than static; unbounded rather than bounded and integrated” (p. 41). Thus, the influence of culture becomes habitual and subconscious and makes life easier.

Applied to teaching culture in foreign language programs, this theory suggests that cultural understanding is an ongoing, dynamic process in which learners

continually synthesise cultural inputs with their own past and present experience in order to create meaning (Robinson, 1985).

2.5.1.2.6 Culture is ethnocentric (Gamble & Gamble, 1996; Gudykunst, 1994; Lustig & Koester, 1993; Samovar & Porter, 1991)

Since most cultural knowledge is obtained unconsciously, most people who grow up in the same culture tend to take their way of life for granted. The tendency to judge the customs of other societies by the standards of one's own is called ethnocentrism. According to Lustig and Koester (1993), ethnocentrism is the belief that the customs and practices of one's own culture are superior to those of other cultures. All cultures have a strong ethnocentric tendency (Lustig & Koester, 1993); no culture is immune to ethnocentrism.

Though ethnocentrism can inspire a strong sense of patriotism, it is a large obstacle in intercultural communication. As Samovar and Porter (1991, p. 278) state, "as we learn ethnocentrism so early in life, and on the unconscious level, it might well be the single major barrier to intercultural communication." With ethnocentrism rooted in their minds, people tend to believe that their own culture is the most desirable and superior to all others. Therefore, they refuse to appreciate other people's ways of life. Misunderstandings and conflict are often the consequences of ethnocentrism. It is difficult to eliminate ethnocentrism completely, but at least a strong awareness or sensitivity to ethnocentric attitudes can be developed. In order to minimise misunderstanding and conflict, it is important that people learn to understand that other people's behaviour may be appropriate to their own cultural groups' standards, rather than to those of the majority culture.

**2.5.1.3 *Culture values***

People from different cultural groups not only differ in the ways in which they perceive the world, but also in their judgement about what is right and wrong, appropriate and inappropriate, beautiful and ugly, valuable and worthless. By understanding the values of a cultural group, it can help us to better appreciate the behaviour of its members and enable us to make more accurate interpretations and predictions about what they do and say in interpersonal communication. Much

research has been conducted to examine culture values. The following section discusses three representative models developed by Hall (1976), Hofstede (1983, 1984), and Schwartz (1990).

Hall (1976) examines culture from a communication perspective and classifies culture into two categories: high context culture and low context culture. He argues that cultural contexts affect every aspect of human communication. Hall's model is widely applied in the study of intercultural communication.

Hofstede (1980) identifies four consistent dimensions of cultural values and his theory has been widely used as an analytical tool in cultural studies. The four dimensions are:

- *Power distance*, which refers to the extent to which a society accepts that power in relationships, institutions, and organisations is distributed unequally;
- *Uncertainty avoidance*, which examines a cultural group's reaction to uncertainty and ambiguous situations;
- *Individualism-collectivism*, which describes the relationship between the individual and the collectivism which prevails in a society;
- *Masculinity-femininity*, which defines different traits of men and women.

Hofstede's model applies directly to the understanding of cultural values from the organisational perspective. The four dimensions may not cover everything in the value system of a culture, but they present a practical way to observe and study the main characteristics of a culture and are, therefore, helpful in cross-cultural studies.

Schwartz (1990) argues that many universal values exist in both high context and low context, and individualist and collectivist cultures. He believes that in order to reach intercultural awareness, we must also study the universal commonalities of human behaviours. Schwartz's model searches for common factors of human behaviours that can be used to help people from different cultures better understand each other. Although this model is not yet commonly employed in

intercultural communication study, it complements those models described above that focus only on differences between cultural values.

The world makes sense to people only when it is observed through the lens of culture. To understand others, people must go into the perceptual world of others, and try to experience reality in the same manner as they do. Usunier (2000) asserts, “culture is used not only as a guide for communication and interaction, quite subconsciously, with others in one’s own community, but also for rather more conscious interaction with people belonging to other cultural communities” (p. 3). In sum, the study of cultural values is the most important gateway to reach complete intercultural awareness, which is to promote an understanding of the two sides of a coin that represent both differences and similarities of cultural values.

## **2.5.2 Communication**

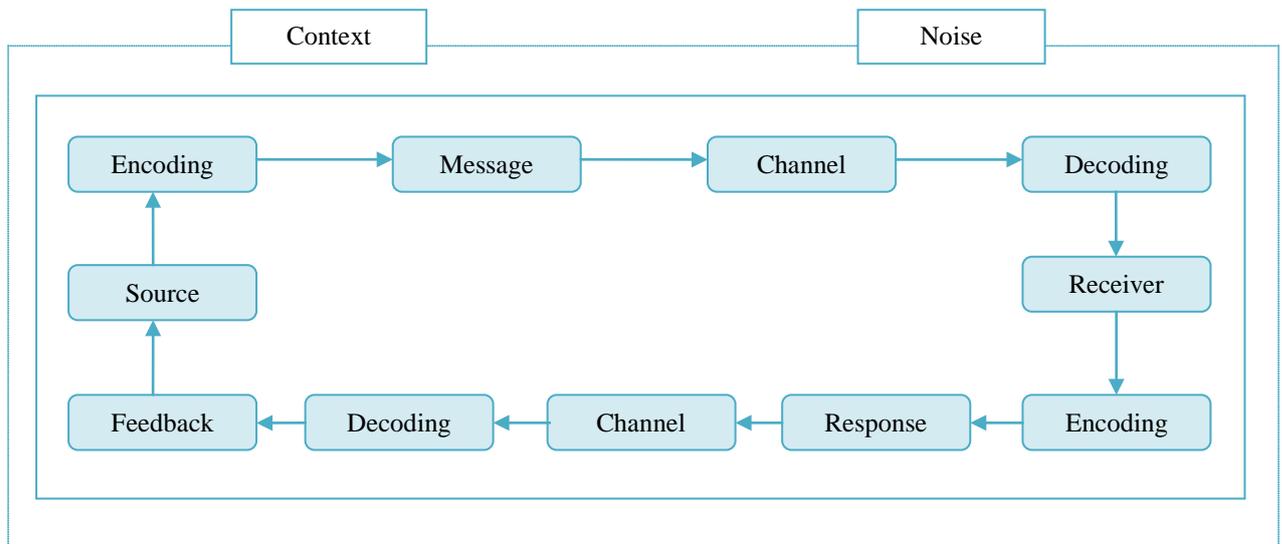
### ***2.5.2.1 Definition of communication***

This section progresses from an understanding of culture to an understanding of how cultural differences affect communication. The transition in understanding both concepts should be a smooth one, for as Hall (1959, p. 217) reminds us, “culture is communication and communication is culture.” There are many different ways to define communication; in its most general sense, communication refers to the sharing and exchange of information, ideas and feelings. In fact, communication, the basis of all human contact, occurs anywhere there are human beings. From birth to death, all types of communication play a vital part in daily life, but it is hard to find an adequate definition of communication due to its complexity. Just as Lustig and Koester (1993) assert, “the term communication is difficult to define because it has been used in a variety of ways for varied and often inconsistent purposes.” (p. 25)

Simply speaking, communication means getting across ideas, views and emotions to others. According to Hunt (1985), “communication involves a person attempting to use symbols (words and signs) in such a way as to create meaning in the mind of another person” (p. 5). Phatak, Bhagat and Kashlak (2005) provide another simple definition: “communication is the process of conveying data, information, ideas, and thoughts from one person to another” (p. 366). In other

words, communication is the process by which one party gives a message that is received by another party. That is to say, communication involves people who send and receive messages, sometimes simultaneously (see Figure 2.5).

Communication can take place on different levels and can be classified into several types. Furthermore, Schirato and Yell (2000, p. 34) argue that “communication is concerned with making meanings, and the kinds of meanings that are made depend very much on the specific cultural contexts.” Depending on the context, this may lead to a complete communication breakdown. For example, eye contact is an important aspect of body language. A simple eye gesture might be interpreted with a diversity of meaning across cultures. Eye contact is an indispensable part of the communication process in Western cultures. However, maintaining eye contact is not usually acceptable in certain Asian cultures.



*Figure 2.5 A model of communication-Adapted from Berlo (1960), Gamble & Gamble (1996), Hunt (1985), Phatak, et al. (2005), Tubbs & Moss (1994).*

Figure 2.5 shows the components and the process of a communication event. Communication is enacted as a cycle. The person who initiates the communication process is called the sender; and the person receiving it is the receiver. A message is transmitted to the receiver through a channel, which can also be a medium—a face-to-face meeting, an email, a telephone call, or a videoconference. The message is received and interpreted by the receiver and understood. Feedback uses the same processes, with the receiver changing roles with the sender. Context and noise/interference can affect the interaction (Berlo, 1960; Gamble & Gamble, 1996; Hunt, 1985; Phatak, et al., 2005; Tubbs & Moss,

1994). Therefore, in intercultural communication, the sender and the receiver of messages do not perform their roles independently; instead, they alternate between the two roles all the time, that is to say, they are the sender and receiver of messages simultaneously and continually.

Sending and receiving messages is a complex process, and it is generally accepted that the meaning of a message to the sender is not always the meaning understood by the receiver. In actual communication, the sent message could hardly be identical to the received message; the potential for misunderstanding exists in all communicative transactions, especially in communication between cultures. Keeping silent in class, for instance, might mean lack of interest to teachers from a Western culture, whereas in an Eastern culture, such as China, it indicates respect.

“Communication, obviously, plays an essential role in an intercultural learning process,—in verbal as well as non-verbal communication” (Fennes & Hapgood, 1997, p. 165). Phatak et al. (2005) claim as follows:

A very important part of learning how to communicate in one’s own culture, as well as across cultures, is learning how to use appropriate media to convey a message. There are two types of media: verbal and nonverbal. Verbal communication consists of any oral or written means of transmitting a message through words. Nonverbal communication is the art and science of communicating without using words, either in written or spoken form. (p. 369)

In addition, Hall (1966) points out that culture provides a highly selective screen between man and the world and culture filters what human beings pay attention to and what they ignore. This selective screen influences how people encode and decode messages. Within a high context culture, most of the information is either in the physical context or internalised in the speaker; with a low context culture, the mass of information is vested in the explicit verbal code. The level of context determines everything about the nature of communication and is the foundation on which all subsequent behaviour rests (Hall, 1976).

### 2.5.2.2 *Characteristics of communication*

Interpersonal communication is a complex process. Understanding some of the basic ingredients and characteristics of communication (listed below), can help to enhance awareness of the possibility of misunderstanding and, therefore, may help avoid it. According to Goodacre and Follers (1987), “successful communication occurs whenever the interaction of all the components of communication takes place smoothly.” (p. 18)

#### 2.5.2.2.1 Communication is dynamic (Gamble & Gamble, 1996; Hunt, 1985; Lustig & Koester, 1993; Samovar & Porter, 1991)

In any communication event, the sender and the receiver of messages constantly shift from being encoders to decoders and the messages also change in each turn of interaction.

#### 2.5.2.2.2 Communication is systemic (Kress, 1988; Lustig & Koester, 1993; Samovar & Porter, 1991)

Communication does not take place in a vacuum, in an isolated setting, but in a specific context. Context is a key element in both culture and communication. Kress (1988) stresses, “the processes of communication always take place in a specific social and cultural setting” (p. 5). Communication is contextual; people interact with each other within particular physical and social surroundings. Moreover, physical and social context together define the actual practice of communication—what to be communicated, where, when, with whom—and how it is realised.

#### 2.5.2.2.3 Communication is symbolic (Goodacre & Follers, 1987; Lustig & Koester, 1993)

Communication depends on the use of symbols. Symbols or codes are the basic ingredients of communication. Symbols may take the form of written or spoken words, body signs, and many other forms that represent certain meanings to whoever recognises them and makes sense of them. All cultures use symbols, but they usually attribute different meanings to the same symbol and many use

different symbols to mean the same thing. Competent intercultural communicators, therefore, must learn to read the symbols and understand the exact message.

2.5.2.2.4 Communication can be either intentional or unintentional (Gamble & Gamble, 1996; Lustig & Koester, 1993; Samovar & Porter, 1991)

When people intentionally send messages to others, they select the words or actions with which they communicate, and they do so with some degree of consciousness. However, intention is not a necessary condition in order for communication to take place. Being aware that actions convey many potential messages is very important when engaging in intercultural communication. As Hall (1959, p. 52) maintains, “we must learn to understand the ‘out-of-awareness’ aspect of communication. We must never assume that we are fully aware of what we communicate to someone else.”

2.5.2.2.5 Communication has a consequence (Gamble & Gamble, 1996; Hunt, 1985; Lustig & Koester, 1993; Samovar & Porter, 1991)

This characteristic of communication means that when people receive a message, something happens to them (they have a reaction). It also means that all of their messages, to some degree, affect someone else. People cannot send messages without influencing others. The influence may be good or bad, significant or insignificant, but it is an influence nevertheless.

### **2.5.3 Culture and communication**

It is recognised widely that one of the characteristics separating humans from other animals is the development of culture. The development of human culture is made possible through communication and it is through communication that culture is transmitted from one generation to another (Gudykunst & Kim, 1992).

Culture and communication are not separate entities or areas (Schirato & Yell, 2000). Kress (1988) states, “culture and communication are two sides of the same coin” (p. 10). Understanding the intertwined relationship between culture and communication is crucial to intercultural communication. On the one hand, culture is the foundation of communication. According to Kress (1988), “nothing

outside culture can be a part of communication. Culture sets the ground entirely for communication, for what can be communicated, what is communicable, and for how it is communicated” (p. 10). Without sharing and understanding between communicators, no communication is possible. On the other hand, culture is learned through communication. Kress (1988) states, “anything outside the scope of communication is non-cultural, as communication is a cultural process, new cultural meanings are constantly produced in the processes of communication” (p. 10). Jandt (2007) argues that “the way that people view communication—what it is, how to do it, and reasons for doing it—is part of their culture.” (p. 47)

As mentioned above, culture and communication, are indivisible from each other; the understanding of one demands the understanding of the other and the changes to one will cause changes in the other. When cultures vary, communication practices also vary (Samovar & Porter, 1991). If the culture is different, the communicative patterns in that culture will be different, too. The curse of belonging to a culture is that we are ‘unable to observe the very eyes with which we are viewing the world’, a dilemma pointing to the fact that, to a large extent, we are trapped in our own culture and frame of mind (Stier, 2004). The major task of intercultural researchers is to find out how culture and communication condition and transform one another, so that real understanding can be achieved among intercultural communicators.

## **2.5.4 Intercultural communication**

### ***2.5.4.1 Definition of intercultural communication***

As previously discussed, rapid development of international trade, improved technologies of communication and transportation, and the tendency of globalisation have greatly increased the capacity for international contact between people all over the world. To understand and accept cultural differences becomes imperative in effective intercultural communication in global society.

Internationalisation has become a catchword of the times in higher education and globalisation is influencing universities world-wide through market competition, radically changing the face of the university as an institution (Yang, 2002). Yang (2002) also puts forward the meaning of internationalisation for a university: the

awareness and operation of interactions within and between cultures through its teaching, research and service functions, with the ultimate aim of achieving mutual understanding across cultural borders.

The globalisation of the world inevitably leads to cultural diversity as well as multiculturalism in all aspects of life. According to Phatak et al. (2005), “as globalization spreads to different parts of the world, and cultural diversity increases in multinational and global corporations, successful communication is critical” (p. 380). There is no denying that intercultural communication is becoming a significant part of people’s daily life and work. Both for business and personal life, more and more people want to know about different cultures and to be able to effectively communicate with people from diverse cultural backgrounds.

Tubbs and Moss (1994, p. 420) define “intercultural communication as communication between members of different cultures (whether defined in terms of racial, ethnic, or socioeconomic differences).” This means that most people are interacting with at least one culturally different person; intercultural communication is communication between members of different cultures. This is a broad definition, involving any type of cultural differences between communication participants. For example, these participants may differ in nationality, region, race, religion, status, occupation, gender, or age. Moreover, the definition is simple, but the process is complex. Intercultural communication involves differing perceptions, attitudes and interpretation, and even two people from the same culture may encounter communication problems. Intercultural communication involves recognised cultural differences which in some way affect communication (Braun & Clarke, 2006). By combining the meanings of both culture and communication, Lustig and Koester (1993) put forward the following definition of intercultural communication:

Intercultural communication is a symbolic, interpretive, transactional, contextual process in which the degree of difference between people is large and important enough to create dissimilar interpretations and expectations about what are regarded as competent behaviours that should be used to create shared meanings. (p. 58)

In addition, according to Tate (2003, p. 213), “intercultural communication is an essential and necessary skill to learn to manage the emotional and psychological challenges of operating outside one’s cultural comfort zone.” It focuses on symbolic, interactional processes between people (Ziegahn, 2001). Neuliep (2006) argues that “intercultural communication is a complex combination of the cultural, microcultural, environmental, perceptual, and socio-relational contexts between two people who are encoding and decoding verbal and nonverbal messages” (p. 32). Most recently, Piller (2010, p. 1) states that:

Intercultural communication in real life is embedded in economic, social and cultural globalisation, transnational migration and overseas study. The main challenges of intercultural communication are linguistic challenges of language learning, the discursive challenges of stereotyping, and the social challenges of inclusion and justice.

Intercultural communication is an interesting and valuable theme for discovering insights about problems facing migrants in Australia. The concept “acculturation” is particularly useful in explaining the pain and joy of migrants in their attempt to make sense of a new way of life in a new cultural discourse while adapting to a new discourse system (Boyatzis, 1998).

#### ***2.5.4.2 Intercultural awareness and sensitivity***

As culture is subconscious, people are generally least aware of their own cultural characteristics. Hall (1966) suggests that culture hides more than it reveals, and, strangely enough, what it hides, it hides most effectively from its own participants. Years of study have convinced him that the real job is not to understand foreign cultures but to understand our own. According to Triandis (1977), intercultural awareness requires individuals to understand, from their own cultural perspective, that they are cultural beings and to use this understanding as a foundation to further determine the distinct characteristics of other cultures, in order to effectively interpret the behaviour of others in intercultural interactions.

As mentioned throughout the previous chapter, globalisation is a current world trend, brought about by the rapid development of science and technology,

especially in the areas of transportation, telecommunication, and information systems. It naturally follows that people from diverse backgrounds have come into more and more contact with each other with a regularity that is unique to this period of human history. As Gamble and Gamble (1996) declare, “society and the world have been transformed into a mobile, global village, much as Marshall McLuhan, a communication theorist, forecast over three decades ago” (p. 35). According to Robertson (2003), “globalization changed the nature of human communities ..., generating new dangers and challenges” (p. 6). As a result, intercultural communication has become more common and widespread (Tubbs & Moss, 1994).

People need to adapt to this changing world. Being able to communicate with people from other cultures is one aspect of this adaptation, for example, “some people may receive their education in another country, thus taking on the role of foreign student” (Brislin, Cushner, Cherrie, & Yong, 1986, p. 15). To increase people’s cultural fluency, they should be aware of and sensitive to different values, beliefs, attitudes and assumptions, as well as culturally different modes of behaviour, in diverse aspects of life. Awareness includes knowledge of the context in which communication occurs and knowledge of one’s own culture. Any communication is first of all contextual. In any case, competence is not developed in a vacuum—the situation and cultural context are indispensable to this process. An intercultural person should be well-informed in relation to which behaviours are appropriate and which are not in a particular situation.

Moreover, as cultures vary, misunderstandings and difficulties in intercultural communication arise when there is little or no awareness of divergent cultural values, beliefs, and behaviours. To overcome many of these difficulties, so as to ensure smooth communication between people from different backgrounds, cultural awareness plays a key role. People tend to assume, though often unconsciously, that the other party of the communication has the same values, beliefs, behaviours, and customs as they themselves. Empathy, respect, interest in the particular culture, flexibility and tolerance play key roles in intercultural sensitivity (Neuliep, 2006). In addition, the importance of increasing “cultural awareness” has been emphasised by some researchers (Brislin, et al., 1986; Nixon

& Bull, 2005). Becoming aware of culture and cultural differences helps people to monitor their ethnocentrism, to respect and be sensitive toward culturally different others, and also to become comfortable with the differences (Nixon & Bull, 2005).

Chen and Starosta (1996) view intercultural awareness as the cognitive aspect of intercultural communication competence. They argue that it refers to the understanding of cultural conventions that affect how we think and behave.

Triandis (1977) expresses similar opinion, by stating that intercultural awareness emphasises the changing of personal thinking about the environment through the understanding of the distinct characteristics of our own and other's cultures.

Intercultural awareness can also be considered as a process of attitudinally internalising insights about those common understandings held by groups that dictate the predominant values, attitudes, beliefs, and outlooks of the individuals (Adler, 1987).

Furthermore, Bennett and Stewart (1991) propose a culture-general model for the acquisition of intercultural sensitivity, which is made up of "two broad stages: ethnocentrism and ethnorelativism." Ethnocentrism is defined by Bennett and Stewart as a disposition to view one's own cultural point of view as central to reality, while ethnorelativism is the conscious recognition that all behaviour exists within a cultural framework, including one's own. Both stages are further divided into three stages that are developmentally ordered. The stages of ethnocentrism are denial, defence and minimisation; and the stages of ethnorelativism are acceptance, adaptation and integration (Liddicoat, et al., 2003).

Intercultural awareness has been defined as an integration of knowledge, attitudes and skills that enhances cross-cultural communication and appropriate and effective interactions with others (Smith, 1998). Intercultural awareness includes:

- knowledge of the effects of culture on the beliefs and behaviours of others;
- awareness of one's own cultural attributes and biases and their impact on others; and
- understanding the impact of socio-political, environmental and economic context of others.

Additionally, intercultural awareness can be viewed as the process of developing better awareness and understanding of one's own culture and others' cultures all over the world. It is mainly to increase international and cross-cultural understanding. Considered and better thought of as a competence in itself, intercultural awareness encompasses a set of attitudes and skills among which Rose (2003) lists the following:

- Observing, identifying and recording;
- Comparing and contrasting;
- Negotiating meaning;
- Dealing with or tolerating ambiguity;
- Effectively interpreting messages;
- Limiting the possibility of misinterpretation;
- Defending one's own point of view while acknowledging the legitimacy of others'; and
- Accepting difference.

Seen as a competence, intercultural awareness is more than knowledge about various and distinct cultures that language learners need to master. It is, rather, an attribute of personal outlook and behaviour; it emerges as the central but diversely constituted core of integrated curriculum (Crawshaw, 2004).

According to Brislin et al. (1986), "in adjusting to life in another culture, people are likely to experience a number of emotional reactions due to feelings of displacement and unfamiliarity, and because of their status as outsiders" (p. 39). Therefore, it is useful to look into some important aspects of intercultural communication competence, as this may help people better understand what they should know about intercultural competence, and how they should behave in an interculturally competent manner.

#### ***2.5.4.3 Intercultural communication competence***

Previously, it was noted that communication is the exchange of information or meaning. When communicating, one should attempt to understand other people's meaning, not only their words. As the meanings of words are determined by

culture, cultural knowledge is essential to the understanding of communication with people from a different culture. Valdes (1986) states that between societies of greatly differing socioeconomic structures, however, intercultural differences play a significant role when members of the one culture learn the language of the other.

As Liddicoat (2005) states, intercultural competence means being aware that cultures are relative; that “there is no one ‘normal’ way of doing things, but rather that all behaviours are culturally variable” (p. 205). Another view is put forth by Ramsey (1996), who believes that the most important factor in intercultural communication competence is the awareness and responsibility for one’s actions and the “meaning we create and through which we then interpret our experience” (p. 13). Intercultural awareness should be the basis from which learners start to develop their intercultural communication competence. In the context of foreign language learning, intercultural competence means being able to mediate between two cultures (Byram, 1997).

In addition, Pachler, Evans and Lawes (2007) state that “intercultural communicative competence acknowledges that language and culture are interrelated and that, for language to be properly understood and used, learners require socio-cultural and world knowledge” (p. 73). Intercultural communicative competence is the degree to which an individual is able to exchange information effectively and appropriately with individuals who are culturally unlike others (Rogers & Steinfatt, 1999). The central concern of the study of intercultural communication is, to some extent, improving and developing intercultural competence. There are complex and unpredictable settings, situations and numerous people from a variety of diverse cultures in the global village. Each diverse cultural group or community creates a unique cultural system of symbols, assigns unique meanings to these symbols and the norms of their use. Following this, they develop ideas of what is appropriate and what is inappropriate. Admittedly, however, economic integration and advances in transportation and telecommunication have broken down geographical isolation.

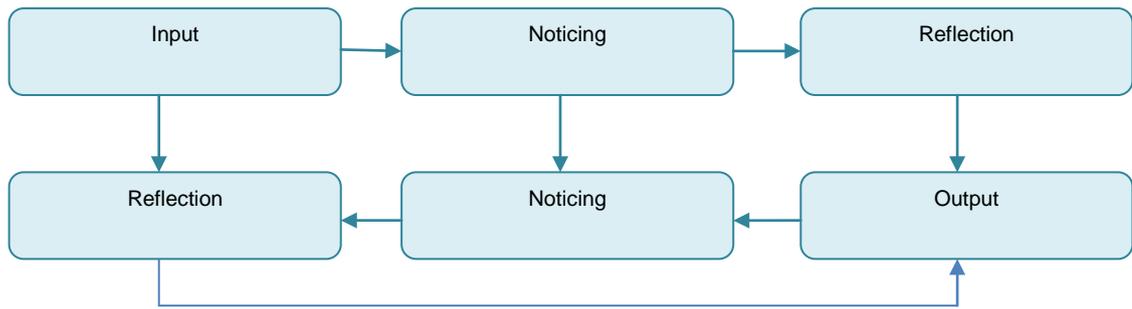
As previously emphasised, the world is more global and mobile than even before. To survive and communicate effectively in such a complex pluralist global village,

developing intercultural competence seems to be the most urgent task. It is evident that intercultural communication is challenging and demanding. Therefore, to successfully communicate with people from different cultural backgrounds, people need to have intercultural communication competence. This competence requires some adaptation to the cultures of both parties participating in the communication. Both parties have to make certain compromises, that is to say, to make some changes in behaviour that are different from their own culture.

Intercultural awareness forms one of the most important components of intercultural competence. According to Lustig and Koester (1993), “competence in intercultural communication also demands an awareness of the different forces that sustain and maintain specific cultures” (p. 95). Specifically, Lustig and Koester (1993) propose the components of intercultural communication competence as follows:

- Intercultural competence is contextual.
- Both interpersonal competence and intercultural competence require behaviours that are appropriate and effective.
- Intercultural competence requires sufficient knowledge, suitable motivations, and skilled actions (Gudykunst, 1994; Hofstede, 1994).

It can be seen that each component alone is insufficient to achieve intercultural competence. As Kaye (1994) affirms, “in intercultural settings, therefore, good communicators can apply their repertoire of interpersonal skills appropriately when they relate to people of different cultures” (p. 190). Figure 2.6 demonstrates a pathway for developing intercultural competence proposed by Liddicoat (2002).



*Figure 2.6 A pathway for developing intercultural competence-Adapted from Liddicoat (2002)*

Significantly also, one of the most important areas of research addressed by intercultural scholars is how misunderstandings can be minimised when people communicate with others from different cultures. As indicated earlier, context is very important to understanding intercultural communication. As mentioned above, Hall (1959, 1966) identifies two classic dimensions of culture: high-context and low-context cultures. According to Hall, all information transactions can be characterised as high or low-context. Byram (1997, p. 31) asserts that “descriptions of intercultural communication must take into consideration the social context in which it takes place.”

Finally, according to Kim (1986), intercultural communication is an interdisciplinary field of study which incorporates research from disciplines such as: social psychology, sociology, cultural anthropology, sociolinguistics, and communication. The study of intercultural communication can awaken people’s cultural sensitivity, the reflection and unlearning of ethnocentrism and help the cultivation of an open attitude and the general development of a healthy personality. There is no doubt that intercultural communication studies should focus both on the study of cultures, as well as communication. To use Chinese logic, this involves communication to let people learn about other cultures and by learning about other cultures to let people improve their communication (Zhao & Edmondson, 2005).

As stressed earlier, improvement in transportation, developments in communication technology and globalisation of the economy have made intercultural communication more necessary than ever. Language learning is therefore an important element for intercultural communication. The possibility of

fulfilling some of the aims of the cultural dimension in language teaching as stated by Byram and Risager (1999) are:

- Giving students an understanding of their own cultural identity;
- Developing their ability to see similarities and differences among cultures;
- Helping students to acquire an interested and critical attitude towards cultural/social issues;
- Breaking down prejudices and developing students' tolerance; and
- Making language teaching more motivating.

In recent times many discussions about the relationship between language and culture are non-stopped. As discussed in the previous section, there is no doubt that culture and language learning are inseparable and essential to the goals of modern language learning (Byram, 1989; Kramsch, 1993, 1998; Liddicoat & Crozet, 1997). Language only has meaning when understood within its cultural context, with that context illuminated by the basic beliefs and values at the core of society. But exactly how to integrate language teaching with culture teaching is still at the early stages of exploration.

## 2.6 International, national and local contexts for language learning

This section will discuss how this study is situated within the wider context that is the current situation of language education internationally, nationally and locally.

Figure 2.7 illustrates how language learning equips Australian students with the skills to make connections with local, regional and global communities.

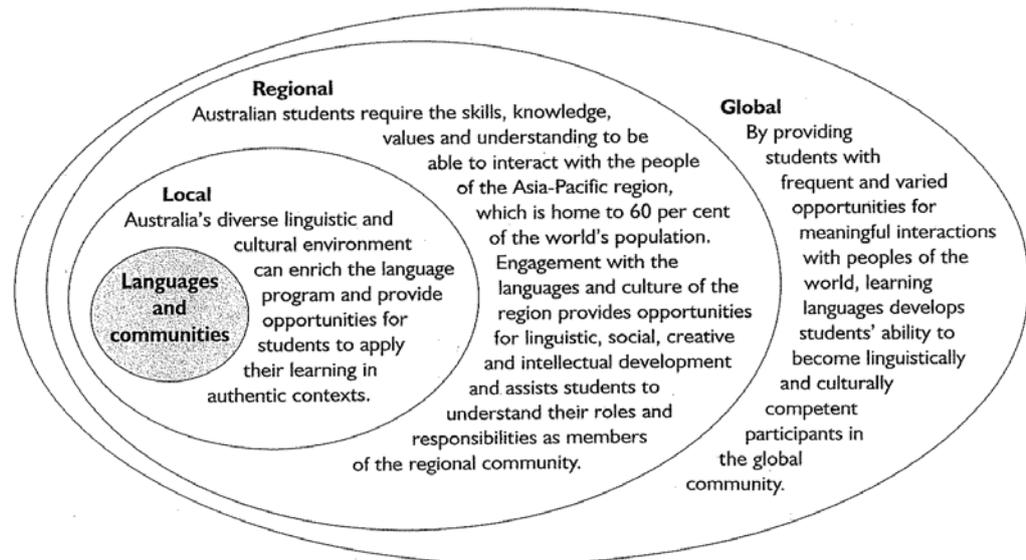


Figure 2.7 Making connections (Browett & Spencer, 2006, p. 2)

### 2.6.1 International context

As a result of extensive migration and tourism, worldwide communication systems for mass and private communication, economic interdependence and the globalisation of the production of goods (Risager, 1998), people from different cultural backgrounds mingle across the world. Therefore, there is more opportunity and a stronger need for language learners to be familiar with the experiences and perspectives of other cultures (Browett & Spencer, 2006). Proficiency in a foreign language expedites the intercultural communication experience (Neuliep, 2006). This has brought about dramatic changes in the field of language education globally. For instance, in the United States, interest in and support for language study has been strengthened in recent years by growing recognition that proficiency in more than one language benefits both individual learners and society (Marcos & Peyton, 2000). O'Connell and Norwood (2007) argue that knowledge of foreign languages and cultures is increasingly critical for

the nation's security in the United States and its ability to compete in the global marketplace. Moreover, in Britain, in 2014 learning a foreign language will be compulsory from the age of 7 years in England's primary schools in an overhaul of the national curriculum, the British education secretary is to announce. Under Mr Gove's plans, primary schools could offer lessons in Mandarin, Latin and Greek, as well as French, German and Spanish (BBC, 2012).

### **2.6.2 National context**

As stated at the beginning of the introductory chapter, after the period of the "White Australia" policy, "Australia then moved to a policy of cultural diversity that was more accepting of immigrant cultures, races, and ethnicities to the limit of not threatening national unity or the security of society" (Jandt, 2007, p. 348). Australia's latest census results (Australia Bureau of Statistics, 2013b) show that a quarter of the country's population is foreign born, while nearly half of all Australians has at least one foreign-born parent. Additionally, in 2011, 82% of the overseas-born population lived in capital cities compared with 66% of all people in Australia.

According to results of the 2011 Census (Australia Bureau of Statistics, 2013b), Mandarin has overtaken Italian as the second-most spoken language after English in Australian households. Mandarin showed the biggest increase of the nation's top 20 languages, growing 52.5% to 336,410, or 1.6% of households. Australia as now a multicultural society, and the demand from students from preschool to university level wishing to learn Mandarin is growing strongly across the nation (Australian Council of State School Organisations, 2008). These figures reveal that greater demand for Mandarin speakers who are well aware of Chinese language and culture is part of the new economic, political and social reality. To know another language is to open up another world of understanding. Such as Chinese culture, it is so different from Western cultures can be accessed through the language. Learning Chinese becomes an interesting process rather than something that has to be done in order to speak another language.

As mentioned in background section in Introduction Chapter, international education has made a great contribution to Australian economy. The benefits of

hosting international students, however, transcend mere economics, bringing cultural and social diversity, energy and curiosity that enrich us all (University of Tasmania, 2012c). International students enhance the social and cultural fabric of the universities at which they study and the communities in which they live. Their presence fosters a mutual appreciation and respect for other cultures and experiences, and helps cement Australia's reputation as one of the most innovative and educated nations in the world (Universities Australia, 2012).

In addition, Sawir (2013) also points out that the cultural diversity introduced by international students provides a teaching resource for developing teacher and students' cultural awareness and learning.

As indicated earlier, with the release of the Australia in the Asian Century White Paper, rapidly transforming Asian region, cultural attitudes are crucial for Australia in this Asian Century, specifically, an improvement in the cultural attitudes of young Australians. Language education grounded in cultural awareness has much to offer. Quality language education is not just about gaining fluency, as cultural understanding is more important than language proficiency. Rather, a quality language education challenges students to think outside their native environment, and to be curious about unfamiliar cultures. In addition, by learning about the linguistic features of culture, students develop understandings of the importance of cultural attitudes in society. In communication practice, students put this understanding into action; an experience that is immediate, deep, and personalised. Communication in a language you cannot speak well is a precious experience. Therefore, an understanding of the breadth and depth of cultural differences, and the possibility of bridging the cultural gap, is the key outcome of quality language education.

#### ***2.6.2.1 Language education in Australia***

To understand the local context it is first necessary to look at events at the national level and determine the influence of such developments on the local context.

It is no secret that Australia lags behind in learning foreign languages compared to its European and Asian counterparts, despite the social, economic and political

demands for foreign language competence. For instance, within Australia there has been an ongoing conversation about the need for students to study Asian languages. The latest development happened in November 2012 when Australia in the Asian Century White Paper was released. The paper calls for students to be given the opportunity to study one of four languages throughout their entire school career: Chinese (Mandarin), Hindi, Indonesian, and Japanese. Most experts have not been optimistic about this plan. Adelaide University Asian studies expert Kent Anderson says achieving such an outcome would be a tall order, but a crucial one: what is really important about learning a language is learning empathy for others, and learning empathy for another culture (Jackson, 2013). That is to say, empathy is crucial in engaging with people from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

These are several schemes along with the paper. The aim is to support universities to increase the number of students who undertake Asian studies and Asian languages as part of their university education, including through increased use of the National Broadband Network and digital technology. Australia's economic and trade ties with China and the wider Asian market create a demand for Australia's workforce to study Asian languages. The Australian Government encourages young Australians to study foreign languages and, especially, to become Asia literate or Asia competent.

The following section will review a couple of influential policies and reports in the history of language education in Australia.

#### ***2.6.2.2 National language policies***

From the early 1980s to 1996, Australia probably led the English-speaking world in systematic language policy-making (Ingram, 2000). Australia has been at the forefront among English-speaking nations in the area of language policy and language-in-education policy (Richard, Baldauf, & Djite, 2000). The importance of developing Australia's linguistic resources in preparing its future citizens for successful participation in a rapidly changing world was first recognised nationally in the National Policy on Languages (Lo Bianco, 1987). This policy probably marked the first attempt in the English-speaking world to produce a

comprehensive and systematic national policy on languages (Ingram, 2000). It provided a broad educational, social and cultural rationale for the study of languages. It was instrumental in providing national direction, particularly in promoting the study of a second language for all students, and in advocating for access to and maintenance of the first language for students of non-English speaking backgrounds. As a result of this policy, the government provided substantial funding to support the teaching of key Asian languages, including Chinese, in addition to other traditionally taught European languages.

A comprehensive review undertaken by the Department of Employment, Education and Training led to another new policy being adopted in 1990. The new policy was entitled Australia's Language: the Australian Language and Literacy Policy (ALLP) (Department of Employment Education and Training (DEET), 1991a, 1991b). There was particular priority attached to encouraging the learning of Asian languages with the policy advocating for all Australian children to have access to Asian language teaching (Ingram, 2000). Later, in 1994, another program called the National Asian Languages and Studies in Australian Schools Strategy (NALSAS) on Asian Languages and Cultures report, "Asian Languages and Australia's Economic Future", was introduced into the education system at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels (Rudd, National Asian Languages & Cultures Working Group (Australia), & Council of Australian Governments, 1994). Both ALLP and NALSAS put more importance on Asian literacy. As mentioned earlier, Asia literacy in the twenty-first century is considered increasingly critical to Australia. This was highlighted in the 2020 Summit held in 2008, and continues to be strongly supported by successive federal governments.

Apart from the key language policy issues already mentioned, a few other reports have impacted upon aspects of language policy, especially cultural perspective in Australia. Released in 1978, the Galbally Review was perhaps the most significant report which comprehensively reviewed multicultural policies for language learning (Ingram, 2000). It stated, "we are of the opinion that the cultural and racial differences which exist among us must be reflected in educational programs designed to foster intercultural and inter-racial understanding" (Galbally Review, 1978).

In the early 1990s, the then Minister for Employment, Education and Training summed up “as important as proficiency in Australian English is for Australians, we also need to enhance our ability to communicate with the rest of the world. We must increase our strength in languages other than English in order to both enrich the intellectual and cultural vitality of our population, and to help secure our future economic well-being .... Many more Australians need to learn a second language” (Department of Employment Education and Training (DEET), 1991a).

Later, in *Language Teachers: The Pivot of Policy* (Australian Language and Literacy Council (ALLC), 1996), the Australian Languages and Literacy Council examined the supply and quality of language teachers and drew attention to the gross lack of teachers of the priority foreign languages and the inadequate language proficiency and teaching skills of many of those currently employed (Ingram, 2000).

In addition, the National Statement and Plan for Languages Education in Australian Schools 2005–2008 (MCEETYA, 2005) emphasised the fact that education in a global community brings with it an increasing need to focus on developing intercultural skills and understanding. It affirms the important role languages education can play in leading students to reflect in meaningful ways on their role in the world, the language and culture that shape them and their values and attitudes (Browett & Spencer, 2006).

Moreover, as suggested by Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians (Ministerial Council on Education, 2008), global integration and international mobility have increased rapidly in the past decade. As a consequence, new and exciting opportunities for Australians are emerging. This heightens the need to nurture an appreciation of and respect for social, cultural and religious diversity, and a sense of global citizenship. Goal 2 of the document recognises this need: “successful learners are able to relate to and communicate across cultures, especially the cultures and countries of Asia.” (p. 8)

In brief, these national developments reflect international trends in language education. As reported by McLaughlin and Liddicoat (2005), intercultural language learning is developing as a key direction in languages education both in

Australia and elsewhere. One of the key goals of intercultural language learning is to move beyond culture learning as factual knowledge about culture to a critical engagement with diversity through language. It involves purposefully helping learners “to notice, analyse and reflect on their own culture and language as well as the target language and culture” (pp. 5-11). Intercultural language learning gives Australian students opportunities to develop such familiarity with the experiences and perspectives of other cultures (Browett & Spencer, 2006).

Having broadly considered the history and policies influencing language education in Australia over the past few decades, it can be seen that the nature of language teaching itself is still in need of specific attention.

### **2.6.3 Local context**

This section will give a brief description of the local context, focussing on the University of Tasmania, and beginning with an introduction to the language programs currently offered at the university. Then the latter part will provide some background information on international education at the university.

The University of Tasmania (UTAS) is a regional university located in Tasmania, the smallest state in Australia, with a long history and tradition as a provider of distance education as well as on-campus education. It is the fourth oldest university in the country, and remains the only university in Tasmania (University of Tasmania, 2012a).

The Introduction provided a brief orientation to language programs at UTAS. There are five foreign languages offered on campus by the School of Humanities within the Arts Faculty: three Asian languages (Chinese, Indonesian and Japanese) and two European languages (French and German).<sup>1</sup> This research focused exclusively on the five foreign languages currently offered on campus at UTAS. In general, the main features of the programs (University of Tasmania, 2013b) are as follows:

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<sup>1</sup> Latin and Ancient Greek are offered by UTAS as distance units.

### ***2.6.3.1 Language units and studies units complement each other***

The foreign language programs at UTAS have a distinctive feature: language units and studies unit coexist. Language units are designed to complement studies units or vice versa, and together are intended to give new depth to the understanding of target cultures. In addition, language units give students a good grounding in traditional grammar, which can lead to improvement in higher level study of the target language. For example, because of its ability to integrate a wide range of disciplines, Asian Studies is an interdisciplinary program, involving various departments, both within and outside the School of Humanities. It brings together such disciplines as the history, geography, politics, sociology and languages of modern Asia and the South Pacific. The program aims to provide informed knowledge of, while stimulating interest in, the specific areas of Asian Studies, and to develop a range of useful and valuable skills and qualities of mind.

### ***2.6.3.2 In-country programs and exchange programs***

In-country programs and exchange programs provide students with the opportunity to immerse themselves in the culture of their target language. For example, Chinese, Indonesian and Japanese courses offer short-term and long-term in-country programs. Intensive language programs are offered during spring/summer at all levels and students complete assessments that are credited to their UTAS unit results. Meanwhile, French has its own exchange program to enrich students' learning experiences. Each year these various programs attract a number of students from different disciplines who value the specific language and cultural learning opportunities provided by these programs.

### ***2.6.3.3 University language college programs***

The UTAS College Program (UCP) is an initiative by UTAS in partnership with Tasmania's public and private senior secondary schools and colleges to enable eligible students to undertake university study. It aims to engage mainly Year 11

and 12 students<sup>2</sup> with tertiary study and to provide opportunities to extend and reward talented and hardworking students. Through the UCP, Tasmanian senior secondary students may study units at UTAS at the same time or in addition to their Tasmanian Certificate of Education (TCE) studies. Specially speaking, the UCP in Languages enables college students to have a concurrent enrolment at UTAS and gain a result in first year introductory level language in the Diploma in Languages. This program attempts to build a bridge between school language programs and university language programs. It has proven to be quite successful over the past several years, and has the added benefits of strengthening the cooperation between schools and the university and boosting the UTAS language student enrolment number.

#### ***2.6.3.4 High achiever programs***

The University of Tasmania High Achiever Program provides high-achieving Tasmanian senior secondary school students with the opportunity to enrol in University units to complement and extend their TCE or International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Programme studies. This program has been running at UTAS since 2004 and is available to Year 11 and 12 students who have demonstrated exceptional academic achievement. A range of subject areas are available to study and successful completion of units may result in credit towards a relevant University of Tasmania degree on completion of Year 12. Over the years, eligible college students enrolled in intermediate to advanced language units elected to continue their language study at UTAS.

#### ***2.6.3.5 Staff and students' profile***

Across all the language programs at UTAS, members of the teaching staff are a mix of native speakers of the target languages as well as non-native speakers who have high language proficiency in the target languages. However, the small number of the profile (or tenured) staff members poses a serious challenge to

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<sup>2</sup> Aged 17-18 years and in their non-compulsory pre-university years of study.

meeting day-to-day teaching commitments, so casual staff members play a vital supporting role in language programs.

Meanwhile, in terms of the student component, the majority of language students are domestic students who are enrolled in undergraduate courses at UTAS. Every year, however, international students from different cultural backgrounds also enrol in, and bring diversity to, UTAS's foreign language programs. Students major in different subjects, and their average age is between 17 and 23 years. Additionally, based on the demographic information gathered in this research study, quite a few mature-aged students over 45 years of age enrolled in language programs during the period of this research study.

Teachers and students come to the language classroom with their own ideas and opinions about the country, culture and native speakers of the language they teach or learn.

#### **2.6.3.6 *Internationalisation***

In a review of the University of Tasmania's international education strategy in 2008 (University of Tasmania, 2012b), the University amended its vision and adopted the following definition of internationalisation:

Internationalisation is the integration of international, intercultural and global dimensions into the overall student and staff experience and into the teaching and learning, research and service functions of the University. (para 2)

The University's goals for internationalisation, according to its Internationalisation Plan 2011–2013 (University of Tasmania, 2012a), are:

- UTAS will be internationally recognised for its research, and be a sought after partner for international collaboration.
- UTAS will utilise an internationalised curriculum that is global in perspective and facilitates intercultural competence.

- UTAS will provide a quality student experience, and encourage students to take up mobility options that prepare them academically and socially for life and careers in the globalised society.
- UTAS will welcome students from around the world through onshore and offshore programs.
- UTAS will welcome staff from overseas institutions to UTAS, and encourage UTAS staff to engage with colleagues in other countries.
- UTAS will act as a catalyst to build appreciation of the benefits of internationalisation in the wider community. (para 4)

Furthermore, “global perspective” is included as one of the five generic attributes of graduates of the University of Tasmania, putting an emphasis on intercultural learning:

Global perspective: Graduates will be able to demonstrate a global perspective and inter-cultural competence in their professional lives. (para 1)

UTAS is committed to providing Asia-related skills and knowledge to Tasmanians. Most recently, the University of Tasmania has received federal funding to send more than a hundred students abroad to study in Asia as part of their degree. Under the AsiaBound Grants Program, the Department of Industry, Innovation, Climate Change, Science, Research and Tertiary Education has provided funding to UTAS for 12 project grants totalling \$297,000—enough to support around 103 students to gain experiences in society, culture, health, business or languages in Asia. The aim of the AsiaBound scheme is to encourage more Australian students to participate in a study experience in Asia, become Asia-literate and increase competency in Asian languages (University of Tasmania, 2013a).

To conclude, the strategies, goals, generic attribute, and grant funding detailed above emphasise the importance placed on intercultural skills at UTAS.

This researcher has personally experienced the need for intercultural awareness both as a native Mandarin-speaking teacher of English in China, and a native-

speaking teacher of Mandarin to (mostly) English-speaking students at UTAS. A description of this researcher's personal journey and its intersection with this research study will be described in the Conclusion chapter.

## **2.7 Conclusion**

In this chapter, a corpus of literature relevant to this research into the investigation the perceptions of teachers and students of the nature and role of intercultural awareness in foreign language teaching and learning in tertiary education has been reviewed. This chapter has provided an overview of a wide range of literature on terminology, language learning theories, culture study in language, and aspects of intercultural communication. Importantly, too, the chapter outlined the relevant contexts within which this study was situated.

The literature reviewed in this section offers many challenges to educators in the field of tertiary education, and also offers guidance to inform the design of the research study which intends to explore some intercultural aspects of tertiary education and internationalisation of the curriculum.

Chapter Three describes the research methodology, data gathering methods and data analysis approaches used for this research study.

## **3. Chapter 3 – Methodology**

### **3.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter has examined the relevant literature and theories that inform how intercultural awareness is treated in foreign language teaching and learning in the Australian university context. Based on these theories, a research study was conceived, designed and conducted within one Australian university, the University of Tasmania (UTAS).

The purpose of this research study was to investigate the perceptions of teaching staff and students toward the significance of intercultural awareness in foreign language teaching and learning within an Australian university context. This thesis provides a mixed methods case study account of the significance of intercultural awareness in foreign language teaching and learning at UTAS. Generating both quantitative and qualitative data enabled the research objectives to be met and added to the reliability and validity of the results.

The purpose of Chapter Three is to present and justify decisions made in relation to the design of this study. The chapter begins with an overview of the research approach is given, and then the research methodology is presented. Next, the sample is described and then the data gathering instruments, i.e. interviews and questionnaires. A statement of the purpose of the study, as well as a description of the strengths and limitations of this research design is given. In addition, issues relating to reliability and validity in this study are discussed. Finally, the approach to the analysis of the data in this study is outlined.

### **3.2 Research approaches**

#### **3.2.1 Qualitative and quantitative approaches**

The scope and nature of this study mean that to address the major research question a combination of research approaches was needed. The study adopted both qualitative and quantitative approaches, drawing on the strengths of each to complement the other. The dichotomy of quantitative and qualitative gives an impression that the former is about “fact based on numbers” and the latter on a

“kind of facts” based on human experience (Cohen, 1988). From a meaning making perspective, Lê, Lê and Short (2009) suggest that qualitative research deals with meaning as it works with non-numerical data, whereas quantitative research deals with data which is fundamentally numerical.

Sometimes, “both [quantitative and qualitative approaches] are utilised and data from each are collected and analysed in the same study” (Charles, 1998, p. 30). According to Patton (1990), “one important way to strengthen a study design is through triangulation, or the combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomena or programs” (p. 187). This means using both quantitative and qualitative methods. O’Leary (2010) coincides with this view that:

Mixed approaches can help you capitalise on the best of both traditions and overcome many of their shortcomings; allow for the use of both inductive and deductive reasoning; build a broader picture by adding depth and insights to ‘number’ through inclusion of dialogue, narratives, and pictures; add precision to ‘words’ through inclusion of numbers tallying, and statistics (which can make results more generalizable); allow you to develop research protocols in stages; offer more than one way to looking at a situation; facilitate capturing varied perspectives; and allow for triangulation. (pp. 127-128)

However, quantitative and qualitative methods may appear to be in opposition. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) describe the distinction as follows:

The word qualitative implies an emphasis on the qualities of entities and on processes and meanings that are not experimentally examined or measured (if measured at all) in terms of quantity, amount, intensity, or frequency .... In contrast, quantitative studies emphasise the measurement and analysis of causal relationships between variables, not processes. (p. 8)

Additionally, Patton (1990) describes the particular role of measurement in ways which characterise particular needs and uses:

Quantitative measures are easily aggregated for analysis; quantitative data are systematic, standardised, and easily presented in a short space. By contrast, the qualitative findings are longer, more detailed, and variable in content; analysis is difficult because responses are neither systematic nor standardised. (p. 24)

Further, Hatch (2002) states that all qualitative research is characterised by an emphasis on inductive rather than deductive information processing. This is important because inductive processing occurs when researchers draw a theory from a situation they perceive, whereas in deductive information processing, theory guides the development of hypotheses to be tested. Another major difference between the two, according to Bouma (2000, p. 35), is that “qualitative research is done to find out what is going on in a situation.” So the goal of the research may be descriptive rather than explanatory. This type of research can often be guided by a general objective, rather than a specific hypothesis. As Freebody (2003) asserts, qualitative research can suggest and generate hypotheses, while quantitative approaches can test hypotheses and, thereby, offer researchers the confidence that comes from rigorous experimental design, appropriate testing and statistical probability. Qualitative research approaches have traditionally been favoured when the main research objective is to improve our understanding of a phenomenon, especially when this phenomenon is complex and deeply embedded in its context.

Another major difference between qualitative and quantitative research relates to the underlying assumptions about the role of the researcher. In quantitative research, the researcher is ideally an objective observer, who neither participates in nor influences what is being studied. Charles (1998) states that “investigators try to keep themselves apart from participants. They fear that their involvement, or even their presence, might contaminate the study by causing participants to behave differently than they otherwise would” (p. 174). A different approach is usually taken in qualitative research, as it is thought that the researcher can learn the most by participating and/or being immersed in the situation or context being studied. According to Charles (1998) in qualitative research, “investigators are keenly interested in contexts, values, attitudes, emotions, and social realities

which affect human interaction. Additionally, in order to obtain rich data, investigators often involve themselves closely with those they are observing” (p. 174). The underlying assumptions of each methodology guides and sequences the types of data collection methods employed. One way of expressing this is to say that in qualitative research “the researcher is more interactive with the data-generating process than in quantitative research” (Bouma, 2000, p. 176).

However, it is important for researchers to realise that qualitative and quantitative methods can be used in conjunction with each other in order to generate more effective and powerful results from the research. Strauss and Corbin (1998a, p. 34) assert that, “although most researchers tend to use qualitative and quantitative methods as supplementary or complementary forms, there should be a true interplay between the two.” In other words, researchers should find the most effective ways to incorporate elements of both approaches, to ensure that their studies are as rigorous and thorough as possible. According to Bouma (2000, p. 174), “it should be clear that the difference between qualitative and quantitative research is not one of better or worse but rather one of appropriateness to the question asked.”

In summary, both qualitative and quantitative research methods can provide valuable contributions to knowledge, which are absolutely essential to the research process in social science (Bouma, 2000). Methods should be chosen depending on which is more likely to provide a comprehensive and clear answer that is more descriptive of reality, in answering the research question. Researchers must be as objective as possible. They should not contaminate data collection and data analysis with personal biases and prejudice (Cohen, 1988).

### **3.2.2 Characteristics of qualitative research**

A qualitative research study may be generally defined as a study that is conducted in a natural setting, where the researcher uses observation, interview or questionnaires to obtain information. It is based on the key philosophical assumption that reality is constructed by individuals in interaction with their social world, and therefore, “there are many ‘realities’ rather than the one, observable, measurable reality which is key to research based in the positivist

paradigm” (Merriam & Simpson, 2000, p. 97). Thus, qualitative research starts from a question to be explored rather than a hypothesis to be tested. This kind of data collection gathers words, focuses on their meaning for participants, and describes a process that is both expressive and persuasive, in language.

Creswell (1994) defines qualitative research as follows:

Qualitative research is an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyses words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting. (p. 105)

In addition, Bogdan and Biklen (1992) describe the characteristics of qualitative research as follows:

- Qualitative research has the natural setting as the direct source of data and the researcher is the key instrument.
- Qualitative research is descriptive.
- Qualitative researchers are concerned with process rather than simply with outcomes or products.
- Qualitative researchers tend to analyse their data inductively.
- “Meaning” is of essential concern to the qualitative approach.

The primary goal of qualitative research is to describe and understand how people think, feel and behave within a particular context relative to a specific research question. As Merriam and Simpson (2000) state, the basic aim of this type of research is “to achieve an understanding of how people make sense out of their lives, to delineate the process of (rather than the outcome or the product) of meaning-making, and to describe how people interpret what they experience” (p. 98).

One of the greatest strengths of qualitative research is the ability to ask questions that are meaningful to participants and to likewise receive responses in participants’ own words. Qualitative research is a vast and complex area of

methodology, involving the understanding of social phenomena and it shares data gathering approaches and methods of analysis with quantitative research.

In qualitative research, a wide range of innovative techniques are used, depending on the nature of the research problem, the topic that is being researched and the problems under investigation. The nature of the problem is the central focus for *problem-based methodology* (Robinson, 1993). Robinson (1993) states that problem-based methodology focuses on theories of action and how they might sustain the practices and outcomes that are considered to be problematic.

Freebody (2003) claims that qualitative methods are useful because of the inherent complexity of cultural life, and because researchers need to try to capture the quirks and caprices of human behaviour. In addition, one of the major reasons for doing qualitative research is to develop a more in-depth experience and understanding of a phenomenon in which you are interested (Burns, 2000). Qualitative research also expands the range of knowledge and understanding of the world beyond the researchers themselves. It often helps us see why something is the way it is. According to Hatch (2002), qualitative research seeks to understand the world from the perspectives of those living in it. Furthermore, Cohen (1988) claims that the role of qualitative researchers is to describe, interpret, and unearth the feelings, thoughts, and different kinds of discourses deeply rooted in human experience.

### **3.2.3 Characteristics of quantitative research**

The scientific methods employed by quantitative analysis were originally considered the best way to conduct meaningful research in educational contexts. According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000), in the comparatively recent past, however, attempts have been made to apply the quantitative methods of the scientist, along with qualitative methods, to the research of phenomena.

Quantitative research is the numerical representation of observations for the purpose of describing and explaining a phenomenon. It is used in a wide variety of natural and social sciences.

Additionally, quantitative research draws conclusions based on the compilation of statistics drawn from observations or questionnaires. Quantitative research, long

held to be the only form of research that was valid and reliable, is now being used in conjunction with qualitative research methods in studies where quantitative data alone cannot adequately describe or fully interpret a situation. Current thought holds that the two paradigms are not mutually exclusive and can be used to support each other in most social science inquiry. However, Strauss and Corbin (1998a, p. 34) suggest that sometimes “it might be necessary to make use of quantitative measures; at other times, qualitative data gathering and analysis might be more appropriate.”

### **3.2.4 This research study approach**

The aim of this study was to investigate the perceptions of academic staff members and students to the significance of intercultural awareness in foreign language teaching and learning in an Australian university context.

To fulfil this aim, the following research questions were raised.

- What does intercultural awareness mean to teaching staff and students in general?
- How do teaching staff and students interpret intercultural awareness in tertiary-level language education?
- What are the intercultural experiences of teaching staff and students?
- To what extent does intercultural awareness affect the teachers’ language teaching and students’ language learning?
- What are the most effective ways to develop intercultural communication skills?

In pursuit of the aim and research questions, the following research objectives were set out.

**Research objective 1:** to examine the views of academic teaching staff and university students towards the concept of intercultural awareness in general:

- How do teaching staff and students describe intercultural awareness as a concept?
- How do teaching staff and students perceive intercultural awareness?

**Research objective 2:** to investigate staff and students' perceptions towards the significance of intercultural awareness in foreign language teaching and learning in the Tasmanian tertiary educational context:

- What is the role of intercultural awareness in foreign language teaching and learning?
- What beliefs about cultural integration into language education do staff and students hold?

**Research objective 3:** to examine the intercultural experience of academic teaching staff: and university students:

- What are teaching staff and students' intercultural experiences, personally and professionally?
- What is the influence of staff and students' intercultural experiences on foreign language teaching and learning?

**Research objective 4:** to compare beliefs and perceptions of academic teaching staff and students on intercultural awareness in foreign language teaching and learning:

- What are the identified similarities in beliefs and perceptions held by teaching staff and students?
- What are the identified differences in beliefs and perceptions held by teaching staff and students?

**Research objective 5:** to provide some suggestions or recommendations for enhancing intercultural awareness in foreign language teaching and learning in the context of University of Tasmania:

- What are the characteristics and features of current language programs?
- What are the challenges and obstacles of current teaching approaches?
- In what way can intercultural awareness be enhanced in language teaching and learning?
- How is a language program structured to maximise student learning?

- What are the expectations of teaching staff and students in relation to intercultural awareness in their language teaching and learning?

The research objectives helped determine that a mixed-method approach would be appropriate in addressing the research problem. A mixed-method approach has strength, because it allows a researcher to combine the best of both qualitative and quantitative worlds, and the scope to avoid the weaknesses of both (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). The use of a multiple-methods and a multiple-sources approach in this study is a form of triangulated research strategy (Burns, 2000). This study integrated qualitative and quantitative research methods, and used both teachers and students as data sources, to support the investigation, leading to a more complete understanding of the study.

Using a variety of techniques may provide different perspectives on the situation, therefore providing a richer or more detailed understanding of the phenomena or activities (Bouma, 2000). The data gathering approaches in this study included: interviews and questionnaires, with qualitative data deriving from interviews, and quantitative data generated by the administration of a questionnaire. Used in combination, these methods increase confidence in the reliability of the study.

The following table (see Table 3.1) shows the detailed information about the instruments as well as the specific items and the objectives they addressed.

**Table 3.1** *Research objectives, instruments and specific items*

Research objectives	Instruments	Specific items
<i>Objective 1:</i> views of university teaching staff and students towards the concept of intercultural awareness in general	Questionnaire	Questionnaire Q7-9, Q15-23
	Teacher and student interviews	Interview Q2, Q3
<i>Objective 2:</i> teacher and student perceptions of the significance of intercultural awareness in foreign language teaching and learning in the Tasmanian tertiary educational context	Questionnaire	Questionnaire Q24-43
	Teacher and student interviews	Interview Q4
<i>Objective 3:</i> intercultural experience of university academic teaching staff and students	Questionnaire	Questionnaire Q10-14
	Teacher and student interviews	Interview Q5, Q6
<i>Objective 4:</i> compared beliefs and perceptions of teaching staff and students on intercultural awareness in foreign language teaching and learning	Questionnaire	Open-ended question
	Teacher and student interviews	Interview Q7, Q8
<i>Objective 5:</i> suggestions or recommendations to university policy makers for enhancing intercultural awareness in foreign language teaching and learning in the Tasmanian tertiary educational context	Questionnaire	Questionnaire Q44-48
	Teacher and student interviews	Interview Q9, Q10

### **3.2.5 Limitations and constraints**

There are certain limitations that restrain what can be accomplished in any research study. This study is no exception. This section identifies some of the constraints and limitations of this study.

As discussed in the Introduction Chapter, this study was conducted in one particular Australian university. Due to the small language programs within this university, this study had a rather limited number of participants, which might be one of the potential limitations. This factor may preclude any generalisations being drawn from the results.

Despite the limitations mentioned above, the sample size of this study should be adequate to allow the researcher to achieve the objectives of the research because “sample size depends on what you want to know, the purpose of the inquiry, what’s at stake, what will be useful and what will be credible” (Patton, 2002, p. 244). The sample of this study included teachers and students from all the foreign language programs at UTAS. Their perceptions and experiences in regards to intercultural awareness can potentially contribute in-depth information to the study. Hence, the sample is considered to be appropriate to explore their views on the significance of intercultural awareness in foreign language teaching and learning.

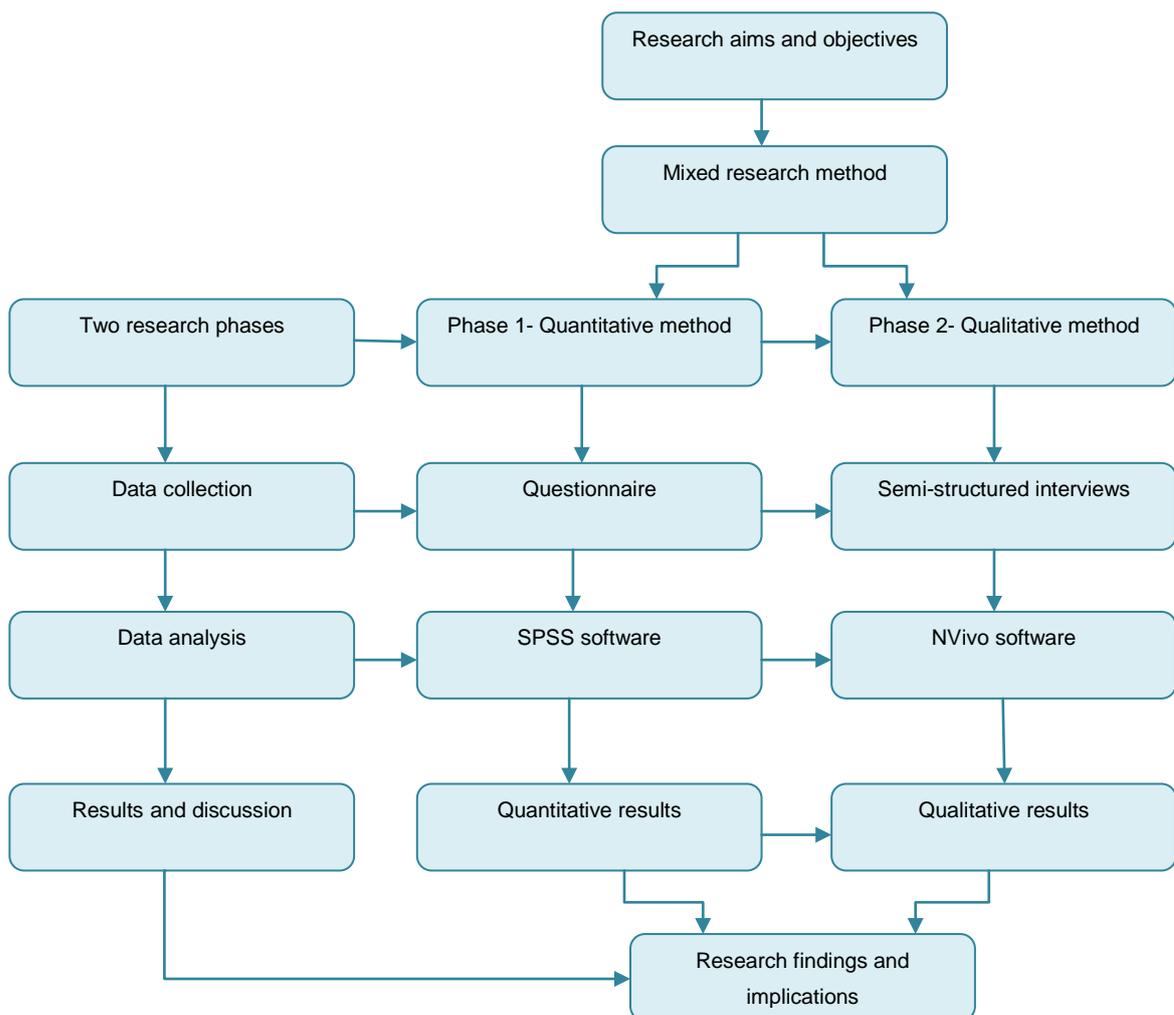
In order to minimise the potential weaknesses that these limitations might cause for the research, all the phases of the research study were developed through critical reflection (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995), and different techniques to ensure trustworthiness were also employed.

### **3.3 Research design**

Research methodology in any research study is often seen as a complex process. A number of important elements need to be considered in relation to methodology, the first of these being the research design. As previously discussed, in the design of this study there were two main research approaches used by the researcher: the deductive or quantitative approach and the inductive or qualitative approach. It is

often quite difficult to determine the optimum choice of methods needed in order to accomplish the study goals.

According to Burns and Grove (1995, p. 225), “the design of a study is the end result of a series of decisions made by the researcher concerning how the study will be conducted.” The research design is based on the research question(s) under investigation and is closely associated with the theoretical framework of the study, and the purpose of the study. The research design also guides planning for implementation of the study. Polit and Hungler (1995, p. 160) argue that “research designs vary with regard to how much structure the researcher imposes on the research situation and how much flexibility is allowed once the study is under way.” The purpose of this section is to justify the research design, arguing its appropriateness for achieving the desired outcomes of the study. The following chart (see Figure 3.1) clearly illustrates the research design of this study.



**Figure 3.1** Research design of this study

In this study, the aim of understanding the perceptions of academic staff members and students of the significance of intercultural awareness in foreign language teaching and learning within an Australian university context underpinned the decisions in regard to design. In this case, combining the two approaches—quantitative and qualitative—provided the researcher with an ability to generate data that could be compared and contrasted. A case study approach was used to frame the research, incorporating appropriate methods to collect data that responded to the research objectives. O’Leary (2004) argues that the process is akin to travelling down a methodological path that is appropriate for the question, the researcher, and the context. It was the researcher’s belief that the research design chosen for this study would generate data appropriate to meeting the research objectives.

### **3.3.1 Case study**

This section discusses the rationale behind the choice to undertake this research using a case study approach. Case study has been used by researchers for many years across a variety of disciplines, “particularly in the social sciences, where researchers are interested in insight, discovery, and interpretation rather than hypothesis testing” (Merriam, 1998, pp. 4-25). It has been used in research involving business and organisational issues, education, child development and youth policy, family studies, international affairs, evaluation, technology development and research on social problems (Yin, 1994).

Case study research has a long history in educational research. It can be either qualitative or quantitative or a combination of both, but, in most cases, case study is used within the field of qualitative research because it allows the researcher to gain an “in-depth understanding replete with meaning for the subject, focussing on process rather than outcomes, on discovery rather than confirmation” (Burns, 2000, p. 460). Burns also added that “a case study ... must be a bounded system—an entity in itself” (p. 460).

This generally means that case studies are useful in order to “discover” or “explore” new issues rather than to “confirm” a statement or theory. In order to get an in-depth understanding of the situation being studied, the boundary of the

case and target population should be clearly defined. In this study, the language program within the University of Tasmania was the case boundary, and the language teachers and students within the Arts Faculty at that university were the target population. Therefore, it is clear that findings from this study are not suitable for creating any kind of broad generalisation; however other language programs at other universities may bear some similarity, and benefit from the understandings gained in this study.

Methods that are used in case studies for data gathering and analysis are sometimes time consuming. The main methods used in case studies include questionnaires, interviews and document analysis (Burns, 2000; Punch, 2005). By implementing a modified case study, such as the one that will be demonstrated in this research, a more realistic approach in terms of time can be implemented so that the objectives of this study are possible to be achieved.

Case studies, which are normally employed when investigating a process or a complex real-life activity, provide the researcher with a structure to look deeply, to probe and dig, to discover and to understand the nuances and complexities of a context. Patton (1987) suggests that case studies become particularly useful where one needs to understand some particular problem or situation in great depth, and where one can identify cases rich in information. Therefore, researchers have made wide use of this qualitative research method to examine contemporary real-life situations. Interviews, observations, surveys and document analysis form the basis of commonly used techniques to find out what happens within an often-complex bounded system.

The case study occurs within a clear and apparent boundary so as to provide and develop a distinct case identity. The case study approach assumes that the researcher “is able to separate some aspect of social life so that it is distinct from other things of the same kind and distinct from its social context” (Denscombe, 2003, p. 37). Merriam (1998, p. 13) suggests a number of boundaries to be found within the educational context, including “a program, an event, a person, a process, an institution or a social group.”

### 3.3.2 Types of case study

The previous section discussed a number of important reasons for employing a case study approach. This section mainly discusses the different types of case study. Stake (1995) suggests three types of approaches to case studies are worthy of consideration. He firstly recognises those studies that are motivated through obligation to study a phenomenon. Researchers study the phenomenon through a desire to learn more in order to improve processes, deliveries or understandings. Researchers have a fundamental interest in the case, and as Stake define this approach as an “intrinsic case study.” Intrinsic case studies can simply be an “examination undertaken because researchers are interested in it, not because by studying it we learn about other cases or about some general problems, but because we need to learn about that particular case” (Stake, 1995, p. 3). An intrinsic case study therefore does not provide understandings about abstract concepts or generalisations, but provides insights into the particular.

If the researcher has a “puzzlement, a need for general understanding, and ... may get insight into a question through studying a particular case” (Stake, 1995), then an instrumental case study approach would be used. The case is used to facilitate our understanding of something. In terms of this study, the researcher was interested in learning about staff and students’ views on intercultural awareness in foreign language teaching and learning, but also interested in how these perceptions developed. These two purposes support both an intrinsic and instrumental approach to the case study. Stake (2000) suggests that in cases such as this “there is no line distinguishing intrinsic and instrumental; rather a zone of combined purpose separating them.” (p. 437)

Stake (2000) defines the third type of case study as the “collective case study” (p. 3). Normally to study a phenomenon involves a set of cases. It is an extension of the instrumental study as it uses common characteristics in an attempt to lead to better understandings about larger collections of cases.

Stake (1995) suggests that sorting the three kinds of case study may be difficult, but distinguishing between them will allow the researcher to use appropriate research methods depending upon whether there is an intrinsic or instrumental

interest. The more intrinsic the case the more the need to “restrain our curiosities and special interests and the more we will try to discern and pursue issues critical to the case” (p. 4). The researcher investigates the object of the case study in depth using a variety of data gathering methods to produce evidence that leads to understanding of the case and answers the research questions.

To sum up, the case study is a category of qualitative or quantitative research that investigates phenomena within a context and within a contemporary bounded setting. It involves the collection of extensive data to fully understand the phenomenon being studied and often answers the “what”, “how”, and/or “why” type questions. It also suggests that the researcher has little management or control of the events under investigation, rather the investigator is observing real life events as they unfold.

### **3.3.3 Capacity of case study**

Beyond defining the different types of case study, it is also important to discuss the capacity of case study method, as all methods have their strengths and limitations. Generally, it can be argued that the former outweigh the latter.

A key strength of the case study method involves using multiple sources and techniques in the data generation process. The advantages of the case study method are its applicability to real-life, contemporary, human situations and its public accessibility through written reports. Case study results relate directly to the common readers’ everyday experience and facilitate an understanding of complex real-life situations. The case study method, with its use of multiple data generation methods and analysis techniques, provides researchers with opportunities to triangulate data in order to strengthen the research findings and conclusions.

The prominent advantage of the case study research design is that researchers can focus on specific and interesting cases. In the design of a case study, it is important to plan how you are going to address the study and make sure that all generated data is relevant. A case study has the purpose of studying a phenomenon as it is occurring, and there is no capacity to control or manipulate the behaviour or the setting. As a result, the case study enables the researcher to

view the phenomenon as it is occurring, there is no requirement to manipulate the actions of participants nor is there an expectation that this could occur. This can be the strength or weakness of case study. Case study enables the researcher to gain a holistic view of a certain phenomenon or series of events (Gummesson, 1991) and can provide a round picture since many sources of evidence are used. It should be noted that combining multiple techniques for eliciting data in case study research strengthens and confirms results.

As with all research activities, there were limitations with the instruments employed in this study; no one approach has all the answers. This research study was limited by its sample size and is also specific to one university. Within the case study approach, issues relating to participants, boundary determination, reliability and validity of data and the role of the researcher were considered carefully in the development of this study as will be demonstrated within the data collection and data analysis chapters. In addition, there is also a potential risk of subjectivity associated with case study research and the researcher sought to minimise the risk of subjectivity by recording the interviews and having them transcribed verbatim.

### **3.4 Methods and techniques**

Having described the research design, this section details the methods and techniques employed in the generation of data for this study, with a particular focus on questionnaires and interviews. As briefly described in Chapter 1, in this study data generation was undertaken in two phases.

Questionnaires were used in the first phase of this study, mainly for identifying possible issues. This is because questionnaires are designed to be objective and to require minimal thinking in order to answer the questions. In addition, respondents can choose when to complete the questionnaires. This method was suitable because of the short time frame and the number of people available for this project. However, there were some potential drawbacks. For example, there was the possibility of the questionnaires being neglected and not returned on time, due to the teaching staff members' and students' other commitments and responsibilities at the time. Other potential problems may include the respondents

answering the questionnaires incompletely, or giving wrong answers due to misunderstanding questions.

Interviews were conducted during Phase 2 in order to get more detailed information in relation to the issues raised in the questionnaires. Interviews can be more open and subjective in nature. They provide a higher degree of flexibility in asking and answering questions when compared to questionnaires. The main disadvantage of conducting interviews is the large amount of time that it consumes. This researcher found that teaching staff members were often busy with their classes and arranging appointments was often difficult. In order to keep respondents responses relevant, and to save time, a semi-structured interviewing style was adopted.

### **3.4.1 Questionnaire**

In this research, a questionnaire was used in conjunction with interview. Burns (2000) states that survey “is the most commonly used descriptive method in educational research, and gathers data at a particular point in time” (p. 566). Burns (2000) lists some strengths of survey, including that “it is one of the few techniques available to provide information on beliefs, attitudes and motives; it is an efficient way of collecting data in large amounts at low cost in a short period of time; and structured surveys are amenable to statistical analysis” (p. 568).

Questionnaire was identified as an acceptable data generation tool for both the qualitative and quantitative approaches to the research. It provided the researcher with factual information as well as opinion. “The properly constructed and administered questionnaire serves as a most appropriate and valid data gathering tool as it is both resource and time efficient.” (Denscombe, 2003, p. 140)

For this research, the questionnaire was an appropriate data gathering tool as it enabled data to be gathered from large numbers of participants in a straightforward and time efficient manner.

### 3.4.2 Designing the questionnaire

Longitudinal survey and cross-sectional survey are the two basic types of surveys (Burns, 2000; Punch, 2005). The difference between the two methods is that cross-sectional survey only samples a portion of a population in a particular time but longitudinal survey samples the same population over a period of time (Burns, 2000; Punch, 2005). Therefore, a longitudinal survey will result in a better understanding about a situation compared to a cross-sectional survey. Still, there are drawbacks to this process, as Burns (2000) explains: “Although it is a much more valuable way of studying development, the longitudinal approach is extremely time-consuming, costly, organisationally complex, and slow in producing results” (p. 571). Therefore, this study used cross-sectional survey in order to ensure that the necessary data could be generated within the allocated timeframe and budget.

For the purposes of this study, the completed questionnaires were collected in two ways: paper-based and web-based. Those who chose to complete a paper-based version of the questionnaire could place their completed questionnaires into stamped, pre-addressed envelopes and post them back to the researcher. The web-based version of the questionnaire was conducted using Qualtrics, an online survey software program used by the university. Prospective participants of the study were then contacted by email explaining the research objectives and asking them to consent to participate in the study. The email also contained a link to the online questionnaire, so that potential participants could read the information sheet together with the instructions on how to complete and return the questionnaire. Once the participants clicked on a “Done” button, the completed questionnaire would be automatically posted onto the Qualtrics website. Upon completion of the survey, respondents were directed to a web page thanking them for their participation. Follow-up emails were sent in an attempt to increase the survey response rate. Qualtrics offers many features including result filtering and the capability to export data for statistical analysis. Responses to the survey were recorded, exported to a spreadsheet, and transferred to a statistical software package for in-depth analysis. Descriptive statistics were calculated and data relationships were analysed.

The questionnaire designed for this study was used to gather the participants' views, thoughts, feelings, attitudes, beliefs, values, and perceptions toward the significance of intercultural awareness in their foreign language teaching and learning experience (Johnson & Christensen, 2004; Wolf, 1997). The questionnaire items were typical of the multiple choice questions/statements used in most questionnaires.

In this study, the questionnaire was divided into three main sections: (a) respondent profile, (b) the survey proper, and (c) an open-ended question. The profile section requested respondent demographic such as age, gender, linguistic background, occupation, the length of time they had taught/studied foreign languages. The survey proper explored the perceptions of teaching staff and students on intercultural awareness in foreign language teaching and learning. This section also contained questions that identified the respondents' beliefs about the significance of culture study in language. For example, statements like "Intercultural awareness enhances the understanding of one's own culture", and "Culture teaching should be integrated into language teaching" were put to respondents. The questions and statements were structured using the Likert Scale format, whereby response choices were provided for every question or statement. The choices represent the degree of agreement each respondent had on the given question (1-Strongly Agree, 2-Agree, 3-Not Sure, 4-Disagree, and 5-Strongly Disagree) (see Appendix B and C).

The Likert Scale survey was the selected questionnaire type as this enabled respondents to answer the survey easily. In addition, this research instrument allowed the researcher to carry out the quantitative approach effectively with the use of statistics for data interpretation. The participants were guided to consider and respond to the questions and statements in relation to their foreign language teaching or learning experience. Their responses appeared as variables that could be organised and analysed using statistical methods and tools.

Questionnaires are very useful as they do not consume a lot of time and funds when compared to interviews, and they can survey a large population within a short period of time. In addition, the nature of the questionnaire means that the

interviewer need not be present, which may help the respondents to feel safe when expressing their feelings and opinions. As Burns (2000) asserts:

The respondent is free to answer in their own time and at their own pace .... Fear and embarrassment, which may result from direct contact, are avoided .... can guarantee confidentiality may elicit more truthful responses than would be obtained with a personal interview. (p. 581)

Another major advantage of questionnaires compared to interviews is that “the style of presenting questions to the participants is more constant” (Burns, 2000, p. 581). Therefore, a more reliable result can be obtained on the comparison of feedback from respondents.

Still, there are several disadvantages in using questionnaires for data generation. “Without the presence of the interviewer, the number of questionnaires returned is not guaranteed and usually, certain ambiguity problems between the respondents and the researcher will remain unanswered” (Burns, 2000, p. 581). Ambiguities may emerge due to misinterpretations of the questionnaires by the respondents, which could lead to obtaining some invalid and irrelevant answers. “One way to reduce these ambiguities is by testing or pilot testing the questionnaire items to uncover deficiencies” (Wiersma, 2000, p. 171) and improving items where necessary, until a form of question that can produce a range of satisfactory answers is achieved. The testing can be done by researcher-colleagues at first in order to identify and correct major mistakes. The next testing can be done on some of the subjects from the targeted population.

The design of the questionnaire requires care to ensure that only necessary, clear and concise items are included. A well-designed questionnaire will help respondents to complete all the items with minimal time and effort. This should reduce the chance of respondents being irritated with unclear questions or instructions that will make them reluctant to complete the questionnaire.

### 3.4.3 Interview

As a data generation method, qualitative interviewing is now used extensively as a key way of exploring social meaning within social science research (Walter, 2006). Qualitative research is a vast and complex area of methodology, which is related to quantitative research. One of the major reasons for doing qualitative research is to become more experienced with the phenomenon you are interested in (Trochim, 2002). Interviewing is one of the most common qualitative methods employed in research and provides in-depth information about a particular research issue or question. In particular, interviews are widely used as a means of exploring participants' attitudes, values and personal perspectives, especially in studies of language and culture (Davis, 1995; Scollon & Scollon, 2001). Furthermore, Cannold (2001) acknowledges the role of conversational interviews and suggests that interviews are "conversations between researcher and participant in which the researcher seeks to elicit the participant's subjective point of view on a topic of interest to the researcher." (p. 179)

In this research project, semi-structured interview was adopted. This approach usually involves the use of an interview schedule, including key topics for the interview (see Appendix D and E). There is greater flexibility in questioning than when using a structured interview, with some divergence possible in order to explore issues as they arise (Minichiello, et al., 1995). The responses to the questionnaires, in addition to the researchers' understandings based on the literature, were used to inform and prepare the interview questions prior to interview. These questions were few in number but allowed for in-depth probing of views, attitudes, thoughts, beliefs, knowledge, reasoning, motivations and feelings associated with the research topic (Johnson & Christensen, 2004). Two sets of open-ended questions were designed for university teaching staff and students. For instance, two core questions asked of both teaching staff and students were: "What does intercultural awareness mean to you?" and "How important is intercultural awareness in foreign language teaching and learning?" These questions were used to investigate the participants' thoughts, to discover the factors which were really important to them, and to get an answer to questions which may have many possible answers (Johnson & Christensen, 2004).

Generation of descriptive data through this approach enabled the researcher to develop insights into participants' views and attitudes towards the role of intercultural awareness in foreign language teaching and learning at tertiary level. The interviews were held face-to-face, as the researcher perceived the interviews to be "active interactions between two people leading to negotiated, contextually based results" (Fontana & Frey, 2000, p. 646). In practice, this meant that any ambiguous or unclear statements made by either the interviewer or the interviewee was able to be clarified and understood by the parties at the time. In addition, a semi-structured interview approach allows the interviewer more opportunities to ask additional questions; a practice not possible when using questionnaires. This high degree of flexibility adds quality to the data generated.

Interviews are time consuming compared to questionnaires, both in collecting and analysing data, and this can be problematic (Burns, 2000; Punch, 2005). One of the reasons that interviews are costly is because before an interview, the interviewer needs to be adequately trained. Since schedules for interviews are fixed and difficult to be adjusted with the respondents, the interviewer needs to acquire as much information as possible he or she can in that particular interview. Only a well-trained interviewer is capable in persuading and comforting interviewees to express most of their opinions willingly within a tight schedule. Interviews are time consuming in terms of the time taken during the interview, travel to and from the interview site, but mainly because the data from interviews require considerable time to be transcribed and analysed. Burns (2000) states that "a complete and accurate recording of the respondent's answers must be made. On the open-ended questions, the respondent's exact words must be recorded verbatim while they are responding" (p. 582). Burns (2000) adds that this can be made possible using abbreviations and use of a tape recorder. Although interviews result in rich data, the amount of work required naturally limits the number of interviewees in a small-scale study.

#### **3.4.4 Management of interviews**

Interviews were held in places convenient to the interviewees. This was mainly at the university as the participants were working or studying during the period of data generation. Prior to the interview, both teaching staff and student participants

had an opportunity to view the interview schedule. Interviews took between 30 and 40 minutes each and were scheduled to ensure that the interviewee had sufficient time to give serious consideration to their responses. The interviews were recorded using a portable digital recorder. Interviewees agreed to the interviews being recorded prior to commencement. Participants were assured of their anonymity and the destruction of the recordings five years after reporting the findings of the study.

This slow and tedious transcription task was completed over several months, but the transcription process provided the researcher time to reflect upon the interview conversations and an opportunity to begin an informal analysis of the data. Kvale (1996) argues that transcription “is not a simple clerical task ... [rather,] transcription itself is an important interpretative process” (p. 16). Once the transcription was complete, copies were sent to interviewees for checking. As the interviews were transcribed verbatim, the interviewers’ concerns related to the ways in which they had expressed their views, rather than to matters of content.

### **3.4.5 Ethics of research**

Matters of privacy, informed content and confidentiality are essential ethical considerations. During the course of this research, the researcher engaged with many people including teaching staff and students at the University of Tasmania, and the researcher was keen to give appropriate consideration to ethical issues. Participants were advised of the aims of this study and willingly consented to participate in the research (see Appendix F, G, H and I). Respondents were not coerced into engaging in any aspect of data generation (Cohen, et al., 2000). Their privacy and safety was given the utmost priority; the researcher was mindful that these individuals may be referenced again in the future by other researchers. Therefore, it was important to ensure that the information gathered, analysed and presented would not cause participants any harm or embarrassment. Plowright (2011) states that participants should be provided with opportunities to ask for clarification or express any concerns or queries they may have about the research. Ensuring participants’ privacy and safety also leads to achieving better cooperation and trust, so that participants will be encouraged to continue their engagement in the research.

Participants gave informed consent (see Appendix J) before they were involved in this research study and had the right to withdraw at any stage. According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000, p. 245) participants might be strongly encouraged to participate, but any decision to become involved or when to withdraw from the research is entirely theirs. It was a requirement of the university that permission to conduct this research was gained from the University of Tasmania Social Sciences Ethics Committee (see letter of approval, Appendix A). The contents of the letter include:

- The purpose and duration of the study;
- The benefits that can be achieved from this study;
- Methods that will be used (questionnaire, interview and then analysis);
- The people who will be given questionnaires and interviewed;
- Confidentiality issues;
- Freedom to withdraw;
- Data management; and
- Dissemination of the findings.

This approval means that the purpose and design of the study met the university's ethical guidelines. This approach helps to alleviate obvious problems with research design. Ethical approval should help participants to feel more secure and become more willingly to cooperate in the research project.

### **3.5 Data collection**

#### **3.5.1 Participants and sampling**

This research involved 319 participants, including 290 students and 29 teaching staff, who were currently teaching or learning a foreign language at the Faculty of Arts, the University of Tasmania. Participants were from two campuses of the university: the Sandy Bay campus in Hobart and the Newnham campus in Launceston. During the period of the data collection, a total of 468 students (continuing students were not included) were enrolled in the language programs in 2011. The sample size of 285 students was thus seen as considerable.

In research terms a sample is a group of people, objects, or items that are taken from a larger population for measurement. The sample should be representative of the population to ensure that researchers can generalise the findings from the research sample to the population as a whole. Therefore the method of selecting samples is important to ensure that the population's thoughts, feelings and perceptions are well represented and not biased to any particular group. As described by Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 77), "qualitative researchers work with particular populations of people, nested in their context and studied in depth – unlike quantitative researchers, who aim for larger numbers of context-stripped cases and seek statistical significance."

This research used stratified sampling due to different strata within the targeted population (teaching staff and students). Stratified sampling offers several advantages that are useful for research that aims to retrieve views of different groups in a population. Burns (2000) states that stratified sampling can "increase precision without increasing sample size by employing prior information about characteristics of the population" (p. 90). This is possible because the fixed population is divided into several groups based on certain characteristics being studied. Without having to increase the sample size, stratified sampling permits the researcher to include all the groups within a population to be represented in the sample. Bias is also greatly reduced as stratified sampling employs random sampling (Burns, 2000; Hoyle, Harris, & Judd, 2002).

Of the total sample of 319 participants, 293 completed the questionnaire and 26 were interviewed. Table 3.2 shows how the number of selected participants from the sample was organised.

### 3.5.2 A comparison of the study samples

Table 3.2 *A comparison of the study samples*

Form of data gathering	Type of sampling	Academic staff	Students	Total
Interview	Purposive	9	17	<b>26</b>
Questionnaire	Opportunity	20	273	<b>293</b>
<b>Total</b>		<b>29</b>	<b>290</b>	

The sample in this study was divided into two groups. One group was drawn from teaching staff members at the University of Tasmania. The second group consisted of students at the University of Tasmania. Two types of sampling were used in this study: opportunity sampling and purposive sampling.

Opportunity sampling or “convenience sampling” is a technique whereby the researcher selects participants based on convenience, generally selecting those who are ‘first to hand’ (Denscombe, 2001, p. 16). This means that the sample consists of persons selected because they are available. This type of sampling was used because the teaching staff members and students work or study at the University of Tasmania and were available to answer the questions.

Purposive sampling can produce valuable data, because the respondents are selected with a specific purpose in mind (Denscombe, 2001). This sample included teaching staff members and students at the University of Tasmania, who were then teaching or studying foreign languages at the Faculty of Arts during the period of data collection. This type of sampling is based on the assumption that researchers will be able to explore cases to develop in-depth understandings of phenomena, through the selection of a highly representative sample (Merriam, 1998).

“One central issue in considering the reliability and validity of the questionnaire survey is that of sampling” (Cohen, et al., 2000, p. 129). An unrepresentative, skewed sample, one that is too small or too large, can easily distort the data, and indeed, in the case of very small samples, prohibit statistical analysis (Naughton, Rolfe, & Siraj-Blatchford, 2001). Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000) suggest

that whichever sampling approach is selected by the researcher, it is critically important to accurately describe the sample's size and characteristics when reporting research.

### **3.5.3 Reliability and validity**

Traditionally, reliability and validity are considered to be very important concepts within the realms of quantitative research. Reliability refers to the reproducibility of the data when the method is replicated (Minichiello, et al., 1995), and indicates the stability and consistency with which the instrument measures the concept and helps to assess the “goodness” of a measure (Sekaran, 1999, p. 204). Validity is the extent to which a measurement procedure yields the correct answer (Minichiello, et al., 1995); in other words, the extent to which the research has measured what the researcher set out to measure (Neuman, 1994).

“Questions of reliability refer to problems in the accuracy of the measuring device while questions of validity refer to the appropriateness of the measuring device” (Bouma, 2000, p. 86). Understanding these two terms is important to understanding measurement in both theoretical and applied data gathering settings (Carmines & Richard, 1979).

There has been considerable debate amongst social scientists as to whether or not validity and reliability are applicable to qualitative research or whether these constructs are better suited to the quantitative or experimental research paradigms (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). It is clear that quantitative and qualitative research approaches differ in regard to reliability. This is briefly explained by Burns (2000):

Qualitative research does not pretend to be replicable. The researcher purposely avoids controlling the research conditions and concentrates on recording the complexity of changing situational contexts. Qualitative researchers tend to view reliability as a fit between what they record as data and what actually occurs in the setting under the study, rather than the literal consistency across different observations. (p. 417)

Furthermore, Lincoln and Guba's model (1985, p. 219) describes four general criteria for evaluation of research and then defines each from both a quantitative and qualitative perspective (see Table 3.3).

**Table 3.3 Comparison of criteria**

Criterion	Qualitative Approach	Quantitative Approach
Truth value	Credibility	Internal Validity
Applicability	Transferability	External Validity
Consistency	Dependability	Reliability
Neutrality	Confirmability	Objectivity

Validity is concerned with the measurement of the item being studied (Burns, 2000; Hoyle, et al., 2002; Punch, 2005). There are two kinds of validity: internal and external. Internal validity can be measured in a few ways: content validity, criterion validity and construct validity. External validity is about generalisability and relates to sampling. This study relies more on achieving internal validity rather than external validity. This is due to the fact that the later concerns generalising the findings so that they can be applied to other populations which have not been directly represented during the process of a research (Burns, 2000; Hoyle, et al., 2002; Punch, 2005).

Merriam (1998) states that reliability and validity are harder to establish in qualitative research than in quantitative research. Merriam also states that ensuring reliability in qualitative research involves conducting the investigation in an ethical manner to ensure that a number of qualities are included in the research. For reliability, these qualities are: dependability, stability, consistency, predictability, and accuracy. Researchers establish reliability through triangulation, and, as Merriam (1998) explains, triangulation is useful because it uses "multiple methods of data collection and analysis, strengthens reliability as well as internal validity" (p. 207).

Merriam (1998) states that "reliability is problematic in the social sciences simply because human behaviour is never static. Researchers seek to describe and explain the world as those in the world experience it which relies on interpretation by the

researcher” (p. 205). In quantitative research, where phenomena are static, “reliability in a research design is based on the assumption that there is a single reality and that studying it repeatedly will yield the same results” (p. 205).

### **3.5.3.1 Reliability and validity of this study**

As this study used both quantitative and qualitative methods to generate and analyse data, this section discusses how validity and reliability were achieved from three perspectives: in general, at the quantitative phase, and at the qualitative phase.

“Data must not only be authentic and believable, but are worthless unless they are also valid and reliable” (Charles, 1998, p. 42). Therefore researchers have to demonstrate reliability and validity in their research methods. In general, this research aimed to achieve both reliability and validity through rigorous data generation and interpretation. The data generation involved both teaching staff and students of all language programs offered at this university, including Asian languages and European languages. The participants were from diverse educational, cultural and linguistic backgrounds, with different genders, degrees and levels of intercultural awareness. Due to the various backgrounds of participants, this study is considered reliable and valid as the findings would not be different if it was conducted again under the same regulation of participant recruitment.

The research is also credible. All the participants in this study were involved only if they were willing and comfortable to participate. They were informed beforehand that their names would not be identified in any research output. Therefore, they could express their thoughts without any apprehension. All these strategies ensured that the participants could give responses confidently and comfortably, and thus the outcomes of the study are credible.

#### **3.5.3.1.1 Reliability and validity at the quantitative phase**

In quantitative research, tests such as the test-retest method (Burns, 2000) are used to determine reliability. Namely, the result from the first test must match the result in the subsequent tests.

A reliable questionnaire item consistently conveys the same meaning. According to Burns (2000, p. 585), “attention must be given also to the validity question; that is, whether the interview or questionnaire is really measuring what it is supposed to measure.” A simple way to test the reliability of items is to ask others (e.g., some members of the respondent groups) to tell in their own words what specific terms mean. Through this process, researchers can identify items that may not have a clear meaning to the respondent group, and can adjust them accordingly. In addition, questionnaire items are valid if they are successful in eliciting true responses relevant to the information desired. If the response is to be valid, it is essential that the respondent understands the question as it is understood by those conducting the questionnaire. To check validity, the same approach as testing for reliability can be used.

According to Burns (2000, p. 585), “validity may be assessed by having some competent colleagues who are familiar with the purpose of the survey examine the items to judge whether they are adequate for measuring what they are supposed to measure.” Through this process of asking others (e.g., colleagues, relatives, and friends) to explain what they believe the question is asking, researchers can also identify questions that do not seem to elicit the kind of information desired (Taylor & Summerhill, 1986).

In terms of this research study, firstly, the researcher outlined all the central issues that she intended to investigate in this study. Secondly, based on these issues, which were added as titles of each subsection of the questionnaire, the questions/statements in the questionnaire were purposely designed and arranged. Finally, questionnaire items were devised according to these issues to ensure that the questionnaire was focused and well structured. Furthermore, opinions from the two perspectives, both teaching staff and students, were tested and compared. Involving participants with different points of views further enhanced the validity and reliability of this study. Additionally, the pilot study was used as an important tool to ensure the reliability and validity of this research study. The researcher then discussed the questions and statements with colleagues and other researchers from which she gained valuable suggestions.

Apart from the above, statistical methods were also used to test the reliability and validity of the study. Scaled question items were entered, coded and tested using Statistical Packages for Social Science (SPSS) version 20.0 to ensure the reliability and construct validity. The reliability of the 40 scaled items was conducted using Alpha reliability. Cronbach's coefficient alpha was used to determine the internal reliability of the instrument. Cronbach's Alpha coefficient examines the internal consistency of scaled items by examining the average inter-item correlation (Le, Spencer, & Whelan, 2008). This is considered to be a fundamental measure of the reliability of research instruments (Pallant, 2011). Calculations of Cronbach's Alpha coefficients provide researchers with information on which questionnaire items are related to each other and which items should be removed or changed. According to Nunnally (1967), all Cronbach's Alpha coefficient values above 0.6 are considered to be acceptable.

The reliability analysis of the questionnaire in this study showed that the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was 0.891, which indicates substantial reliability of the instrument. Values above 0.6 are considered acceptable; however, values above 0.8 are preferable (Pallant, 2011). Based on this good internal consistency, all items appeared to be worthy of retention: the greatest increase in alpha came from deleting item 20 and item 46, but removal of these two items increased alpha only by 0.002. This increase was not dramatic and both values reflected a reasonable degree of reliability. In other words, none of the items substantially affected reliability if they were deleted.

#### 3.5.3.1.2 Reliability and validity at the qualitative phase

However for qualitative study, Burns (2000) suggests several ways to improve reliability:

Investigators outline the reason for the research and the major question they want to address. They explicate their perspectives on the question, stating their research assumptions and biases. They explain their data-gathering procedures, including timing and timelines of observations, spatial arrangements of interviews,

relationships with subjects and categories developed for analysis.

(p. 418)

Unlike quantitative research, there are no standardised or accepted tests for validity or reliability within qualitative research and often the nature of the investigation is determined and adapted by the research itself. There may not be any hypothesis or even any findings as such. Instead the “validity” of the research resides with the representation of the participants, the purposes of the research and appropriateness of the processes involved. The only similarity between the two research methods is that, at some point, questions will be asked and data will be generated (Taylor & Summerhill, 1986).

Qualitative researchers, such as Burns (2000), Strauss and Corbin (1998a), all agree that “good” measures must be reliable and valid. In any kind of research, the main concern about the data collected is the reliability and the validity of the data. If the data and the methods used to generate the data are not reliable and valid, the results from the study are prone to errors and will not be seen as dependable due to the fact that the research is not thoroughly designed and executed from the beginning.

In qualitative research, dependability can be regarded as “a fit between what researchers’ record as data and what actually occurs in the natural setting that is being researched” (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p. 48). As Kvale (1996, p. 181) asserts, “in interviewing there might be as many different interpretations of the qualitative data as there are researchers.” In relation to this issue, Silverman (1993) suggests that the dependability of interviews can be enhanced by: careful piloting of interview schedules; training of interviewers; inter-rater reliability in the coding of responses; and the extended use of closed questions. This study intended to achieve reliability by asking questions from different aspects. The interview questions were designed in a way that allowed the interviewer to investigate the participants’ thoughts from both theoretical and practical perspectives. The researcher sought responses from the viewpoints of both teaching staff and students. This variability enabled the researcher, to some extent, to achieve the reliability of the study. In addition, according to the experiences and feedback gained from the pilot study, some adjustments were made to improve the

researcher's interview skills and interview schedules. Suggestions and recommendations from the pilot interviewees helped enhance the reliability. More detailed information on this process is provided in the pilot study section of this chapter.

### **3.5.4 Triangulation**

Burns (2000), defines triangulation as “the use of two or more methods of data collection in the study of some aspect of human behaviour” (p. 419). Burns (2000) asserts that triangulation can be achieved by checking different data sources using the same method, or by using different methods in relation to the same object of study. The researcher must make the best use of their research design to ensure these techniques help to establish reliability and validity in both quantitative and qualitative study. The triangulation process used in the project design and the data collection helped enhance the validity and credibility of the research (Neuman, 2006). Triangulation is a powerful way of demonstrating credibility, particularly in qualitative research (Campbell & Fiske, 1959). In addition, Miles and Huberman (1994) hold that triangulation is a method of confirming findings, in that “triangulation is supposed to support a finding by showing that independent measures of it agree with it or, at least, do not contradict it” (p. 266). Various methods and data sources were used to ensure the validity and reliability of research findings (Bryman, 2008). By using several methods of generating data, internal validity of a study can be greatly improved. This procedure allowed the researcher to view a particular point from various perspectives, and thereby to enrich knowledge and validity (Sarantakos, 2005). Therefore in this study, triangulation was achieved by employing multiple sources of data, multiple participants and participant groups, and multiple instruments, to ensure construct reliability and validity (Burns, 2000; Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996).

Triangulation allows a better overall view of the findings by reducing bias and increasing the level of confidence of the researcher (Burns, 2000; Punch, 2005). For example, if data were to be generated only from teaching staff, this study would be biased to that one group's opinions. On the other hand, by employing more than one method (multi-methods), such as using questionnaires and interviews, and interviewing different people or groups of people (multi-persons),

in different locations (multi-sites) will give a better understanding of the phenomena being studied. Just as Bryman (2006) argues, multi-strategy research provides such wealth of data that researchers discover uses of the ensuing findings that they had not anticipated.

As previously mentioned, the participants in this study were recruited from the two campuses of the University of Tasmania in order to ensure that all foreign language programs were involved. In addition, this research study used two data collection methods: questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. The combination of different methods and instruments allowed the researcher to gain a holistic and accurate picture within the research field. Moreover, this study sought perceptions of both teaching staff and students. By comparing and contrasting their views, understandings and behaviours, the researcher was provided with access to multi-dimension data sources and opinions. Generally speaking, the combinations of multiple qualitative and quantitative techniques for this case study research therefore enhanced the reliability and validity of findings. Examining a number of staff members and students also enhanced the accuracy, reliability and validity of the results by capturing the holistic essence of the subject studied.

### **3.5.5 Pilot study**

The term “pilot study” refers to mini versions of a full-scale study. Pilot studies include pre-testing instruments, such as a questionnaire or interview schedule, to determine whether they will obtain the desired data (Burns, 2000). Pilot studies fulfil a range of important functions and provide valuable insights for the researcher. For example, they are useful in determining whether there are ambiguities in the questionnaire items or interview questions, and whether the time allowed for completing the questionnaire is adequate (Burns, 2000; Gall, et al., 1996).

In this case, a pilot study was conducted with a small group of the teaching staff and students at the Arts Faculty before the final implementation of the questionnaire and interview. Conducting a pilot study allowed the researcher to ask participants for suggestive feedback on the survey, ensured the clarity and

effectiveness of the questions and statements, and enhanced the validity of this study by pre-testing the particular research instruments (Teijlingen & Hundley, 2001). Once the survey had been modified in response to the feedback obtained as a result of the pilot study, the final, enhanced version of the survey was administered online to the stratified, purposive sample population.

Normally, a pilot study is only conducted to test the quantitative research instrument, however, in terms of this study, in order to acquaint the researcher with meta-awareness of interview; the pilot study included both the questionnaire and the semi-structured interview. The first draft of the questionnaire was trialled with eight participants: two teaching staff members and six students. The initial interview questions were trialled with three participants: one teaching staff member and two students. Basically, the researcher asked these participants for their responses and comments, and also asked them to make recommendations and suggestions for improvement to questionnaire items and instructions. As a result of the pilot study, a few changes were made to either research instrument. The pilot study process effectively enhanced the clarity of the questions and statements and the structure of these tools. For example, in the case of a vague expression in the instructional section of the questionnaire, the researcher added the definition of intercultural awareness to make the questionnaire clearer. A minor technical glitch appearing in the online survey was successfully fixed following feedback provided by the participants. Therefore, the content validity of the research instruments was established at this stage. Based on the results of the pilot study, the final questionnaire and semi-structured interviewing guide were prepared.

### **3.6 Data analysis**

Data needs to be analysed to derive information from it in order to answer the research questions, because data alone often do not yield useful information (Langenbach, Vaughn, & Aagaard, 1994). Sekaran (1999) addresses “three basic objectives in data analysis: getting a feel for the data, testing the goodness of data, and testing the hypotheses developed for the research” (p. 307). Burns (2000, p. 430) states that “the purpose of analysing the data is to find meaning in the data; this is done by systematically arranging and presenting the information. It has to

be organised so that comparisons, contrasts and insights can be made and demonstrated.”

In this study, data analysis was carried out in two major forms: the numerical data gathered in the quantitative phase and the textual data collected from both quantitative and qualitative phases. The numerical data were analysed using SPSS software version 20.0, and the textual data were analysed using NVivo software version 10.0, adopting a thematic analysis approach.

### **3.6.1 Quantitative data analysis**

The first phase of data generation for this research study was conducted using a questionnaire. Questionnaires that are going to yield numerical or word-based data can be analysed using computer programmes (Coakes & Steed, 2003), and when the researcher intends to process the data using such a programme it is essential that the layout and coding system of the questionnaire is appropriate (Cohen, et al., 2000). Once the completed questionnaires started to come back from the field, the information was prepared for input in order to be tabulated and analysed. Before the questionnaires were ready for data-entry, they needed to be edited and coded. There could be no ambiguity as to the meaning of responses and what should be entered.

The data generated from the questionnaire were then analysed using descriptive statistics, as the goal of the data analysis at this stage was to describe, summarise and make sense of this particular set of data (Johnson & Christensen, 2004). As the researcher intended to analyse numerical data generated and find relationships between different variables, SPSS was considered to be the most appropriate tool. After identification of variables, correlations between variables were calculated and interpreted with the help of SPSS. Correlations in research are important to determine the relationships of one variable to another. SPSS is also capable of presenting data into tables and figures, which helps in identifying important trends or patterns resulting from the responses of teaching staff and students. The analysis results were presented in the form of frequencies and proportions. Median values were employed when continuous data were available. Inferential

statistical techniques were adopted, where possible, to determine the significance of the results.

The researcher first explored the data to find out whether the data were normally distributed. A normal distribution is a statistical distribution in which data are represented graphically by a symmetrical bell-shaped curve, with the highest frequency in the middle and lowest frequencies towards the edges. Checking the normality of the distribution of a variable is very important because many statistical tests require normality as a prerequisite. As the data were not normally distributed, non-parametric tests, such as Kruskal-Wallis test and Mann-Whitney U Test were applied to variables with the ordinal data.

To be specific, if the data is now ready for tabulation and statistical analysis, this means that one or more of the following should be done:

- Describe the background of the respondents, usually using their demographic information.
- Describe the responses made to each of the questions.
- Compare the perceptions of various demographic categories to one another to see if the differences are meaningful or simply due to chance.
- Determine if there is a relationship between two characteristics as described.
- Predict whether one or more characteristic can explain the difference that occurs in another.

Details of the quantitative data analysis will be further explained in Chapter 4.

### **3.6.2 Qualitative data analysis**

Data analysis of semi-structured interviews involves assigning a meaning to the transcribed text (interpretation), with the meaning derived from common cultural usage or experience (Strauss & Corbin, 1998a). Once data from the interview have been collected, the next stage involves analysing them, often by some form of coding or scoring (Cohen, et al., 2000). The word *coding* is often used to refer to the first part of analysing the interview data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998a). Coding of data might be done using one of the computer-based analysis programs because

the coding process takes time and careful consideration (Langenbach, et al., 1994). It is acceptable for some of this coding to begin while the data is still being collected, as particular issues are raised consistently across interviews (Burns, 2000). Furthermore, in a flexible research design, the implications for analysis of large amounts of interview data have to be thought about before a researcher commits to the data collection (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

The researcher defines and names the categories of data, and the different theoretical perspectives that researchers hold shape how they approach, consider, and make sense out of the data (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). Upon coding data, the researcher gets to the part of the analysis process where the codes must come together in one overall analysis. Both by coding and analysing data, the researcher uses her or his personal knowledge and experiences as tools to make sense of the information, along with engaging in a process of interview and also employing means of analysis and interpretation that will bring meaning to the data.

In relation to this study, coding began while the data were still being collected. The interview data were classified into categories, themes, topics and propositions. In analysing the interview data in this study, the interviewer was guided by a clear list of issues to be addressed and questions to be answered, and themes were developed from key perceptions. The data collected from the semi-structured interviews were analysed using a constructivist thematic analysis approach and NVivo software as a tool. NVivo, which is made specifically for analysing qualitative data (Bazeley, 2007), is popularly used by researchers to organise qualitative data in various formats, such as texts and documents, audiotapes, videotapes and pictures. It does not only help the researcher in coding the variables but also in interpreting the connection between all the data generated.

However,

with the semi-structured interview the interviewer is prepared to be flexible in terms of the order in which the topics are considered, and, perhaps more significantly, to let the interviewee develop ideas and speak more widely on the issues raised by the researcher. (Denscombe, 2001, p. 167)

Transcripts of interview recordings were used to analyse the respondents' dialogue and provided segments of the conversation that were relevant to the study for analysis (Merriam, 1998). The qualitative data analysis will be further elaborated in Chapter 5.

This research generated an extensive amount of data in the form of text derived mainly from open-ended items in questionnaires and interviews. As mentioned earlier, thematic analysis was applied as it was determined to be suitable for addressing the research problems in this study. The detailed analytic process will be discussed in the qualitative data analysis chapter. Generally speaking, the steps involved in analysing the data were initial coding, focused coding and theoretical coding. By coding and categorising recurring events, ideas or themes from the texts, a certain amount of understanding about a situation was achieved systematically. This systematic approach to organising information was the main reason content analysis was used in this study. Relationships between the codes were then identified, as described by Denscombe (2003), "links and associations that allow certain codes to be subsumed under broader headings and certain codes to be seen as more crucial than others" (p. 120). Researchers study the initial data, compare and contrast the themes and concepts, and then synthesise them into categories (Ryan & Bernard, 2000).

In 1967, Glaser and Strauss developed a method called "constant comparative method" (Merriam, 1998, p. 159) which is a data analysis tool used in a methodology also created by Glaser and Strauss known as "grounded theory" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998b). Denscombe (2003) explains that it is called "grounded" because, "researchers should be engaged with fieldwork as the fundamental part of the work they do" (p. 110). "Constant comparative method" as the name implies, is basically about "comparing existing codes, categories or concepts with new ones as they emerge from further coding of the data. Among the refinements that can be achieved from this process are:

- the similarities and differences between existing ideas;
- break down complex phenomena to more common headings; and
- provide a means to validate current developing theories." (Denscombe, 2003, p. 120)

Therefore, in this study, the “constant comparative method” was used in addition to thematic analysis, as this method is very useful in order to get a better understanding about the issues being studied, by constantly comparing findings from coded closed-ended items in the questionnaires.

In summary, this study’s data analysis used quantitative and qualitative methods, including: descriptive statistics, frequencies, medians and mean banks. Data analysis may consist of determining the influential factors against the major variables involved in this study.

### **3.7 Conclusion**

This chapter has provided a rationale for the methodological approaches chosen for this research project. In this chapter, the researcher has outlined the research process giving reasons why the chosen research approach and methodology were adopted. Secondly, a justification for the data generation, data analysis was given together with the details of the research design, sources of data and details of the management of semi-structured interview and designing a questionnaire is discussed. Thirdly, this chapter described trustworthiness and credibility in the research methodologies that have been established for the purpose of the study, using questionnaires and interviews as a means of generating data. Finally, the analysis of the data was described and the various limitations attached to the research methodology employed were discussed including details of the ethical considerations associated with the research.

In Chapter Four, the results from the quantitative phase of the study, that is, the questionnaire are presented. Special attention is given to the influential factors that offered the closest insight into the participants’ opinions towards intercultural awareness.

## **4 Chapter 4 – Quantitative Data Analysis**

### **4.1 Introduction**

Quantitative analysis plays an important role in empirical research as it can provide evidence in support of claims made in a study. This chapter examines the research objectives (RO) as outlined in Chapter 3: to examine the views of academic teaching staff and university students towards the concept of intercultural awareness in general (RO1); to investigate staff and students' perceptions towards the significance of intercultural awareness in foreign language teaching and learning in the Tasmanian tertiary educational context (RO2); to explore the intercultural experience of academic teaching staff and university students (RO3); and to compare beliefs and perceptions of academic teaching staff and students on intercultural awareness in foreign language teaching and learning (RO4). This chapter begins with a discussion of data analysis techniques and the survey response rate from the survey administration and then describes the demographic background of the participants. It also presents descriptive statistics of participants' responses in terms of personal intercultural experience, aspects of intercultural awareness, intercultural awareness and language learning, intercultural awareness in course design and personal experience in a language program. Finally, it analyses the factors that influence participants' opinions about intercultural awareness in foreign language teaching and learning.

### **4.2 Analysis techniques**

The quantitative data analysis in this study was performed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software version 20.0 (IBM, 2013).

Descriptive statistics have been used to organise, summarise, analyse and present participants' response in a convenient and informative way, using mean, mode, and median values to examine the demographic and frequency data (Munro, 2005).

Mean scores have been reported where appropriate for normally distributed data, while medians have been used when non-normal data distributions were caused by extreme responses and, therefore, are more appropriate for interpreting and

understanding data (Munro, 2005). The results will also be presented in graphs and charts which can be created using SPSS as well (Pallant, 2011).

Apart from descriptive statistics, inferential statistics were used to analyse the data and to draw conclusions from the sample populations (Munro, 2005). Therefore, the collected data from target participants allow inferences to be made regarding the overall population. Statistical tests were chosen for their appropriateness, depending on data distribution. For example, when ordinal data are non-normally distributed, the Kruskal-Wallis test, a “between groups” analysis, is often used to compare the scores on continuous variables (Pallant, 2011). This test provides researchers with information about whether the groups differ; however, it does not inform about the location of the significance. Therefore, post-hoc comparisons were conducted to find out where the differences lie. In this case, the use of Mann-Whitney U test was indicated, as this test is popularly used by researchers to test for differences between two independent variables on a continuous measure (Pallant, 2011).

In relation to this study, since sample data were not normally distributed, the Kruskal-Wallis and Mann-Whitney U tests were considered to be the most suitable. Therefore, these two non-parametric tests were used in this study in order to determine influential factors. First, it was necessary to calculate the median values of the participants’ responses to each question item. This was followed by an analysis of the Kruskal-Wallis test between groups to determine whether statistically significant differences existed between them according to six independent variables (gender, age, mother tongue, degree, academic faculty, the language taught/studied and length of teaching/studying). Within the Kruskal-Wallis test, scores were converted into ranks and the mean rank for each participant group (Muijs, 2004; Pallant, 2011). If significant differences were found using Kruskal-Wallis tests, post hoc testing using Mann Whitney U tests was then conducted to identify which two pairs of each group had significant differences.

The relationships between independent variables and dependent variables are the most important factor emphasised by SPSS (Saldana, 2009). Independent variables provide researchers with nominal data (e.g., gender, age groups) that

have independent response categories. Conversely, dependent variables provide ordinal/continuous data that concern with response categories that form a scale (Saldana, 2011). The questionnaire used in this study included six independent variables (age group, gender, mother tongue, degree, academic faculty, the language taught/studied and length of teaching/studying at this university) and 40 dependent variables. The specific independent variables were chosen because it was believed that these factors may underpin the participants' views and beliefs of the significance of intercultural awareness in foreign language teaching and learning.

To demonstrate the significance of a relationship or association between two variables, a *p*-value is presented and needs to be less than or equal to 0.05 ( $p \leq 0.05$ ) (Munro, 2005; Pallant, 2011).

Lastly, the analysis of qualitative responses to the open-ended questions included in the questionnaire is discussed in Chapter 5.

### **4.3 Survey administration and response rate**

As described in the last chapter, the questionnaire was divided into three sections: Part I, Part II and Part III. Part I included participants' demographic information, Part II comprised questions on participants' personal views and attitudes, and Part III consisted of an open-ended statement to which participants were invited to respond. More specifically, Part I of the survey asked for participants' gender, age, mother tongue, degree, academic faculty, and the language they teach/study and length of studying/teaching at the university; Part II consisted of 40 statements requiring a 5-point scale Likert response, where 1 (Strongly Agree) represents the maximum score of the scale and 5 (Strongly Disagree) represents the minimum score; and Part III, the open-ended question.

As outlined in the methods chapter, the questionnaire had previously been piloted and, as a result of feedback, minor adjustments were made to the wording of statements/questions in order to ensure clarity of meaning was enhanced and ambiguity was reduced, increasing the likelihood that both teachers and students had maximum opportunity to respond accurately.

Both teachers and students were invited to provide their views on intercultural awareness in foreign language teaching and learning in relation to the following aspects:

- Australia and the world,
- aspects of intercultural awareness,
- intercultural awareness and language teaching and learning,
- intercultural awareness in course design, and
- personal experience in a language program.

The open-ended question in the final section focused on further probing each participant's attitudes and beliefs about the significance of intercultural awareness in foreign language teaching and learning in the tertiary education setting. The participants had no obligation to respond to this question, but the responses enabled the researcher to gain in-depth understandings about intercultural awareness and also the factors that influenced participants' perceptions. Most importantly, it provided the participants with an opportunity to add any further comments, allowing the researcher deeper insights into both teachers' and students' perceptions and beliefs. Furthermore, it served as a means of triangulating results as questionnaire responses could be compared with comments made on the open-ended statement.

The data were gathered from two participant groups, a student group (Nst=273) and a teaching staff group (Nts=20). Most of the participants responded using the traditional paper copies of the questionnaire. However, most of the teaching staff chose to complete the online questionnaire that was provided via Qualtrics software. A 46-item questionnaire was administered to 468 students and 27 teachers, who were studying or teaching foreign languages at the Faculty of Arts from the University of Tasmania between May 2011 and May 2012. The questionnaire took approximately 10 minutes to complete and was completed by 293 participants from two main campuses in total, including 273 students (response rate 62%) and 20 teachers (response rate 74%).

#### 4.4 Profile of the participants

This section of the questionnaire sought demographic and background information from the participants who were undertaking foreign language teaching and learning programs at the University of Tasmania. To give a more in-depth analysis of the independent variables making up the sample population, a number of tables were developed. Detailed information relating to the survey respondents is presented below, with teaching staff participants' profiles shown in Table 4.1 and student participants' profiles shown in Table 4.2.

**Table 4.1** *Staff participants' profile*

	Number (n/N)	Percentage (%)
<b>Gender</b>		
– Male	8/20	40
– Female	12/20	60
	<b>Total</b>	100
<b>Age</b>		
– 20-30 years	1/20	5
– 31-40 years	6/20	30
– 41-50 years	5/20	25
– 50 years or older	8/20	40
	<b>Total</b>	100
<b>Mother tongue is English</b>		
– Yes	6/20	30
– No	14/20	70
	<b>Total</b>	100
<b>School at which you work</b>		
– Asian Languages	16/20	80
– European Languages	4/20	20
	<b>Total</b>	100
<b>Language you teach(N=20)</b>		
– Chinese	8/20	40
– French	1/20	5
– German	2/20	10
– Indonesian	2/20	10
– Japanese	6/20	30
– French and German	1/20	5

	Number (n/N)	Percentage (%)
	<b>Total</b>	100
<b>Years of teaching</b>		
– Less than 2 years	3/20	15
– 2-5 years	6/20	30
– 5-10 years	4/20	20
– 10 years+	7/20	35
	<b>Total</b>	100

Table 4.1 shows that the proportion of female participants (60%) was larger than that of male participants (40%). The majority of all staff respondents were non-native English speakers (70%), with less than one-third of them (30%) reporting that English was their mother tongue. Of 20 teaching staff members, half were aged between 31-50 years (55%), with the rest mainly over 50 years old (40%). Among the 20 teaching staff members, 80% were teaching Asian languages, including Chinese, Indonesian and Japanese; 20% were involving with European languages teaching. More than half of teaching staff members had been teaching/working at the university for more than 5 years (55%), 30% of them had been teaching/working for between 2 years and 5 years, and only 15% of them had been teaching/working for less than 2 years.

**Table 4.2** *Student participants' profile*

	Number (n/N)	Percentage (%)
<b>Gender</b>		
– Male	113/273	41.4
– Female	160/273	58.6
	<b>Total</b>	100
<b>Age groups</b>		
– 17-23 years	201/273	73.9
– 24-35 years	41/273	15.1
– 36-45 years	9/273	3.3
– 45 years or older	22/273	7.7
	<b>Total</b>	100
<b>Mother tongue is English</b>		
– Yes	192/273	70.6
– No	81/273	29.4
	<b>Total</b>	100

	Number (n/N)	Percentage (%)
<b>Faculty at which you study</b>		
– Education	4/273	1.5
– Science/Computing/Engineering	52/273	19.2
– Commerce/Business	52/273	19.2
– Health science/Pharmacy/Nursing	1/273	0.4
– Law	17/273	6.3
– Arts	147/273	53.4
	<b>Total</b>	100
<b>Language you study</b>		
– Chinese	58/273	21.4
– French	41/273	15
– German	19/273	7
– Indonesian	12/273	4.4
– Japanese	109/273	39.9
– Chinese and Japanese	11/273	4
– German and Japanese	3/273	1.1
– Chinese and German	3/273	1.1
– Indonesian and Japanese	5/273	1.8
– French and German	1/273	0.4
– French and Japanese	1/273	0.4
– German and Indonesian	1/273	0.4
– Chinese and Indonesian	2/273	0.7
– Chinese and French	1/273	0.4
– French, German and Japanese	2/273	0.7
– Chinese, Indonesian and Japanese	2/273	0.7
– Chinese, German and Japanese	2/273	0.7
	<b>Total</b>	100
<b>Years of studying</b>		
– 0-1 year	122/273	44.7
– 1-3 years	109/273	39.9
– 3 years +	42/273	15.4
	<b>Total</b>	100
<b>Category of student</b>		
– Domestic	75/273	27.5
– International	198/273	72.5
	<b>Total</b>	100

Table 4.2 shows that the proportion of female student participants (58.6%) was larger than that of male student participants (41.4%). The 273 students were aged between 17 and 45 years old, with the majority aged between 17 and 23 years old (73.9%). The majority of all respondents were native English speakers (70.6%), with less than one-third of students (29.4%) claiming that English was not their mother tongue. Of the 273 students, a large number of them (39.9%) were studying Japanese language at the Faculty of Arts, although other students (9.4%) reported studying Japanese language and another language. 72.9% of students were Asian language students, 22.3% were studying European languages, and only a minority of them were studying both Asian and European languages at the same time (4.8%). It should be noted that a small number of students were studying two (10.3%) or three (2.1%) languages at the same time. Of the 273 students, the time they had been learning language(s) varied between “0-1 year” to “over 3 years” at the time of data generation, which resulted in diverse language levels. Almost half of the students had been studying foreign language(s) at this university for less than or just 1 year (44.7%), 39.9% of them had been studying for over 1 year but less than 3 years, and only 15.4% of the students had over 3 years of language learning experience. The number of international students (72.5%) was almost three times of that of domestic students (27.5%).

#### **4.5 Descriptive statistics of participants’ responses**

This section presents descriptive statistics of the participants’ responses in terms of six themes:

- Views about Australia and the world;
- Personal intercultural experience;
- Aspects of intercultural awareness;
- Intercultural awareness and language teaching and learning;
- Intercultural awareness in course design; and
- Personal experience in a language program.

### 4.5.1 Views about Australia and the world

Table 4.3 *Participants' responses on views about Australia and the world*

Items		SA	A	NS	D	SD	Total	Median
<b>Q8. Australia is a nation of cultural diversity.</b>	Count	118	150	15	8	2	293	2
	% of total	40.3	51.2	5.1	2.7	0.7	100%	
<b>Q9. Intercultural awareness is important to Australia.</b>	Count	142	120	18	11	2	293	2
	% of total	48.5	41	6.1	3.8	0.7	100%	
<b>Q10. International students are an important source of intercultural awareness.</b>	Count	155	123	12	3		293	2
	% of total	52.9	42	4.1	1.0		100%	

As can be seen from Table 4.3, all the participants had a positive view in relation to these items. The participants reported that they view Australia as a culturally diverse society (Q8, Median value = 2). They also agreed that intercultural awareness plays an important role in Australia (Q9, Median value = 2) and that international students are an important source of this multicultural awareness (Q10, Median value = 2). The high degree of agreement suggests that there is no need for further investigations and tests.

### 4.5.2 Personal intercultural experience

Table 4.4 *Participants' responses on personal intercultural experience*

Items		SA	A	NS	D	SD	Total	Median
<b>Q11. I like to interact with people from different cultural backgrounds.</b>	Count	167	103	23			293	1
	% of total	57	35.2	7.8			100%	
<b>Q12. I like eating food from other countries.</b>	Count	195	84	13	1		293	1
	% of total	66.6	28.7	4.4	0.3		100%	
<b>Q13. I like to travel overseas.</b>	Count	224	51	12	2	1	290	1
	% of total	77.2	17.6	4.1	0.7	0.3	100%	

Table 4.4 shows the descriptive statistics results obtained in relation to the participants' personal intercultural experience. Generally speaking, the participants agreed that they enjoy travelling to other countries, appreciated food from other countries, and interacting with people from different cultural

backgrounds (Q11, 12 & 13, Median value = 1). Such a high degree of agreement signifies no further investigations or tests are necessary.

### 4.5.3 Aspects of intercultural awareness

Table 4.5 Participants' responses on aspects of intercultural awareness

Items		SA	A	NS	D	SD	Total	Median
<b>Q14. Intercultural awareness enriches one's life.</b>	Count	174	101	17	1		293	1
	% of total	59.4	34.5	5.8	0.3		100%	
<b>Q15. Intercultural awareness widens one's worldview.</b>	Count	211	72	9	1		293	1
	% of total	72	24.6	3.1	0.3		100%	
<b>Q16. Intercultural awareness enhances the understanding of one's own culture.</b>	Count	157	105	17	14		293	1
	% of total	53.6	35.8	5.8	4.8		100%	
<b>Q17. Intercultural awareness enhances world peace.</b>	Count	141	90	50	9	1	291	2
	% of total	48.5	30.9	17.2	3.1	0.3	100%	
<b>Q18. Intercultural awareness is hard to develop.</b>	Count	49	103	61	71	7	291	2
	% of total	16.8	35.4	21.0	24.4	2.4	100%	
<b>Q19. Travel enhances intercultural awareness.</b>	Count	138	129	20	1	1	289	2
	% of total	47.8	44.6	6.9	0.3	0.3	100%	
<b>Q20. Interacting with migrants enhances intercultural awareness.</b>	Count	107	145	34	6		292	2
	% of total	36.6	49.7	11.6	2.1		100%	
<b>Q21. Interacting with international students enhances intercultural awareness.</b>	Count	113	156	21	3		293	2
	% of total	38.6	53.2	7.2	1.0		100%	
<b>Q22. The internet plays an important role in intercultural awareness.</b>	Count	78	121	74	19	1	293	2
	% of total	26.6	41.3	25.3	6.5	0.3	100%	

The descriptive statistics showed a high degree of agreement of the participants in relation to intercultural awareness. Table 4.5 demonstrates that the participants held positive views on all of the statements in this section. For example, they supported the view that intercultural awareness enriches people's lives (Q14, Median value = 2) and widens their worldview (Q15, Median value = 2). They also agreed that intercultural awareness enhances the understanding of one's own

culture, and enhances world peace (Q16 and Q17, Median value = 2). They supported the view that intercultural awareness is hard to develop (Q18, Median value = 2), and travelling, and interacting with migrants and international students enhance their intercultural awareness (Q19, Q20 and Q21, Median value = 2). Lastly, they reported that the internet plays an important role in intercultural awareness (Q22, Median value = 2). Similar to the previous sections, the high degree of agreement suggests that there is no need for further investigations and more tests.

#### 4.5.4 Intercultural awareness and language teaching and learning

Table 4.6 *Participants' responses on intercultural awareness and language teaching and learning*

Item		SA	A	NS	D	SD	Total	Median
<b>Q23. Learning a language involves learning its culture.</b>	Count	162	115	10	4	1	292	1
	% of total	55.5	39.4	3.4	1.4	0.3	100%	
<b>Q24. Cultural component of a language course provides a meaningful context for language learning.</b>	Count	146	129	15	1	2	293	2
	% of total	49.8	44	5.1	0.3	0.7	100%	
<b>Q25. Cultural component of a language course enhances students' motivation towards the target language.</b>	Count	120	137	28	6	1	292	2
	% of total	41.1	46.9	9.6	2.1	0.3	100%	
<b>Q26. Cultural component of a language course promotes students' curiosity about the target culture.</b>	Count	127	141	19	3	1	291	2
	% of total	43.6	48.5	6.5	1.0	0.3	100%	
<b>Q27. Cultural component of a language course does not impede students' language acquisition.</b>	Count	99	116	68	6	3	292	2
	% of total	33.9	39.7	23.3	2.1	1.0	100%	

Table 4.6 provides the descriptive statistics results obtained in relation to the participants' views on the inclusion of cultural study in language teaching and learning. As indicated in the table, 55.5% of staff members and students strongly agreed with the statement that learning a language involves learning its culture, with another 39.4% agreeing with the statement (Q23, Median value = 1). Further, they generally agreed that there were benefits resulting from the inclusion of cultural components in a language course: They strongly supported the statement that cultural component of a language course provides a meaningful context for

language learning (Q24, Median value = 2), enhances students' motivation towards the target language (Q25, Median value = 2), promotes students' curiosity about the target culture (Q26, Median value = 2), and that a cultural component of a language course does not impede students' language acquisition (Q27, Median value = 2). Once again, the high level of agreement to statements in this section of the questionnaire suggests that there is no need for further investigations and more tests.

#### 4.5.5 Intercultural awareness in course design

Table 4.7 Participants' responses on intercultural awareness in course design

Item		SA	A	NS	D	SD	Total	Median
<b>Q28. Teaching about culture should be a part of a language course.</b>	Count	122	126	38	6	1	293	2
	% of total	41.6	43	13	2	0.3	100%	
<b>Q29. Culture teaching should be integrated into language teaching.</b>	Count	105	135	49	3	1	293	2
	% of total	35.8	46.1	16.7	1.0	0.3	100%	
<b>Q30. In-country experience should be included in a language program.</b>	Count	114	111	54	9	3	291	2
	% of total	39.2	38.1	18.6	3.1	1.0	100%	
<b>Q31. Native speaking teachers should be included in a language program.</b>	Count	159	104	26	4		293	1
	% of total	54.3	35.3	8.9	1.4		100%	
<b>Q32. Students in a language program should be introduced to native speakers of the target language.</b>	Count	146	128	17	2		293	2
	% of total	49.8	43.7	5.8	0.7		100%	
<b>Q33. Exchange students should be introduced in a language program.</b>	Count	97	133	56	5		291	2
	% of total	33.3	45.7	19.2	1.7		100%	
<b>Q34. Textbooks in a language program should be written by native speakers of the target language.</b>	Count	88	80	92	30	2	292	2
	% of total	30.1	27.4	31.5	10.3	0.7	100%	
<b>Q35. Translation should be avoided in language teaching.</b>	Count	13	35	100	116	27	291	3
	% of total	4.5	12.0	34.4	39.9	9.3	100%	
<b>Q36. Apart from textbooks, there are other useful resources for teaching in a language program.</b>	Count	134	138	18	3		293	2
	% of total	45.7	47.1	6.1	1.0		100%	

<b>Q37. A language other than English should be taught as a compulsory unit in the Education course.</b>	Count	63	94	81	44	10	292	2
	% of total	21.6	32.2	27.7	15.1	3.4	100%	
<b>Q38. A language other than English should be taught as a compulsory unit in the Nursing course.</b>	Count	35	69	115	61	13	293	3
	% of total	11.9	23.5	39.2	20.8	4.4	100%	
<b>Q39. A language other than English should be taught as a compulsory unit in the Law course.</b>	Count	35	63	110	70	15	293	3
	% of total	11.9	21.5	37.5	23.9	5.1	100%	
<b>Q40. A language other than English should be taught as a compulsory unit in the Business/Commerce course.</b>	Count	51	94	84	55	9	293	3
	% of total	17.4	32.1	28.7	18.8	3.1	100%	
<b>Q41. A language other than English should be taught as a compulsory unit in the Science course.</b>	Count	20	49	121	81	22	293	3
	% of total	6.8	16.7	41.3	27.6	7.5	100%	
<b>Q42. A language other than English should be taught as a compulsory unit in the Arts course.</b>	Count	41	82	107	52	11	293	3
	% of total	14	28	36.5	17.7	3.8	100%	

Table 4.7 indicates that the participants held positive views on most of the statements relating to intercultural awareness in course design section. The participants agreed that teaching about culture should be a part of a language course (Q28, Median value = 2), culture teaching should be integrated into language teaching (Q29, Median value = 2), and in-country experience should be included in a language program (Q30, Median value = 2). A majority of the participants strongly believed that native speaking teachers should be included in a language program (Q31, Median value = 1), and that students in a language program should be introduced to native speakers of the target language (Q32, Median value = 2). Furthermore, the participants mostly agreed on Q33, Q34 and Q36 (Median value = 2). They commonly accepted the view that exchange students should be introduced in a language program; textbooks in a language program should be written by native speakers of the target language; and apart from textbooks, there were other useful resources for teaching in a language program.

Interestingly, regarding whether a language other than English should be taught as a compulsory unit in a range of degree courses, the participants' views were rather different from each other. More than half of the participants agreed that a language other than English should be taught as a compulsory unit in the Education course (Q37, Median value = 2). However, whether or not a language other than English should be taught as a compulsory unit in other courses, such as Nursing (Q38), Law (Q39), Commerce (Q40), Science (Q41) and Arts (Q42), the participants' views were divided (Median value = 3). Therefore, further analysis was conducted to identify factors that influenced participants' views on these questions. The Kruskal-Wallis Test or Mann-Whitney U test was chosen to determine whether these questions were associated with participants' occupation, age group, gender, language background, types of languages studied/taught at this university. The results are presented in the latter sections of this chapter.

#### 4.5.6 Personal experience in a language program

Table 4.8 Participants' responses on personal experience in a language program

Item		SA	A	NS	D	SD	Total	Median
<b>Q43. The language program I have studied is too theoretical.</b>	Count	3	30	73	153	33	292	4
	% of total	1.0	10.3	25.0	52.4	11.3	100%	
<b>Q44. The language program I have studied places too much attention to the language side.</b>	Count	5	33	78	133	44	293	4
	% of total	1.7	11.3	26.6	45.4	15	100%	
<b>Q45. The language program I have studied deals adequately with intercultural awareness.</b>	Count	29	150	85	25	2	291	2
	% of total	10.0	51.5	29.2	8.6	0.7	100%	
<b>Q46. The language program I have studied helps me to appreciate other cultures.</b>	Count	79	165	38	9	1	292	2
	% of total	27.1	56.5	13	3.1	0.3	100%	
<b>Q47. The language program I have studied inspires me to interact with people of different cultures.</b>	Count	95	146	42	8		291	2
	% of total	32.6	50.2	14.4	2.7		100%	
<b>Q48. The language program I have studied enhances my intercultural awareness.</b>	Count	97	154	32	6	1	290	2
	% of total	33.4	53.1	11.0	2.1	0.3	100%	

As shown in Table 4.8, the participants generally disagreed with statements Q43 and Q44 (Median value = 4), reflecting that the participants were quite satisfied with the language programs they undertook. However, they generally agreed with the rest of the statements in this section, Q45, Q46, Q47 and Q48 (Median value = 2).

#### 4.6 Factors that influence participants' opinions

This section reports on the factors that influenced the participants' opinions. Mann-Whitney U tests or Kruskal Wallis tests were performed as appropriate on Q35, Q38, Q39, Q40, Q41 and Q42, all of which had a median value of 3, in order to determine whether participants' occupation (staff or student), age group, gender, language background, category of students (where appropriate), and length of teaching/studying were associated with their views on the role of intercultural awareness in foreign language teaching and learning.

Mann-Whitney U tests were first performed on Q35 (Translation should be avoided in language teaching) by the four factors that may have influenced the participants' responses. The results (see Table 4.9) indicated that international students and domestic students had different opinions in relation to this statement ( $U=6301.5$ , ns). Domestic students responded more favourably on the view that translation should be avoided in language teaching (Mean Rank=140.02).

However, this result is not significant.

**Table 4.9** Mann-Whitney U test on Q35 'Translation should be avoided in language teaching' by category of students

Category of students	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Rank
<b>1. International</b>	75	122.02	9151.50
<b>2. Domestic</b>	194	140.02	27163.50
<b>Total</b>	292		
Mann-Whitney $U=6301.5$ , $z=-1.796$ , $p\text{-value}=.072$ , $r=-.01$			

Additionally, Q38, Q39, Q40, Q41 and Q42 were related to whether or not a language other than English should be taught as a compulsory unit in different degree courses, such as Nursing, Law, Commerce, Science and Arts. Mann-

Whitney U tests were performed on Q38 to Q42. The results showed a very interesting pattern, among all the factors, occupation, language background, category of students, and length of teaching were the four factors that had the greatest impact on the participants' responses. The results from Mann-Whitney U tests are shown below.

#### 4.6.1 Language background

**Table 4.10** Mann-Whitney U test on Q38 'A language other than English should be taught as a compulsory unit in the Nursing course.' by language background

Mother tongue-English	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Rank
<b>1. Yes</b>	198	154.65	30620
<b>2. No</b>	94	129.34	12158
<b>Total</b>	292		
Mann-Whitney U=7693, z=-2.501, p-value=.012, r=-.01			

The analysis result of Mann-Whitney U test on Q38 by language background (see Table 4.10) indicated that there was a significant association between participants' language background and the statement *A language other than English should be taught as a compulsory unit in the Nursing course* (U=7693, p-value=0.012<0.05). An examination of the mean ranks indicated that the native English speakers (Mean rank = 154.65) responded more positively to this statement than did the non-native English speakers (Mean rank = 129.34).

**Table 4.11** Mann-Whitney U test on Q39 'A language other than English should be taught as a compulsory unit in the Law course.' by language background

Mother tongue-English	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Rank
<b>1. Yes</b>	198	158.61	31405
<b>2. No</b>	94	120.99	11373
<b>Total</b>	292		
Mann-Whitney U=6908, z=-3.706, p-value=.000, r=-.02			

Table 4.11 indicated that there was a significant association between participants' language background and the view that *A language other than English should be taught as a compulsory unit in the Law course* (U=6908, p-value=0.000 < 0.05).

A further examination of the mean ranks indicated that the native English speakers responded more positively to this statement than did the non-native English speakers.

**Table 4.12** Mann-Whitney U test on Q40 ‘A language other than English should be taught as a compulsory unit in the Business/Commerce course.’ by language background

Mother tongue-English	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Rank
<b>1. Yes</b>	198	158.04	31291
<b>2. No</b>	94	122.20	11487
<b>Total</b>	292		
Mann-Whitney U=7022, z=-3.51, p-value=.000, r=.02			

The analysis result of Mann-Whitney U test on Q40 by language background (see Table 4.12) indicated that there was a significant association between participants’ language background and the statement *A language other than English should be taught as a compulsory unit in the Business/Commerce course* (U=7022, p-value=0.000<0.05). An examination of the mean ranks indicated that the native English speakers (Mean rank = 158.04) responded more positively to this statement than did the non-native English speakers (Mean rank = 122.20).

**Table 4.13** Mann-Whitney U test on Q41 ‘A language other than English should be taught as a compulsory unit in the Science course.’ by language background

Mother tongue-English	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Rank
<b>1. Yes</b>	198	155.61	30810.50
<b>2. No</b>	94	127.31	11967.50
<b>Total</b>	292		
Mann-Whitney U=7502.5, z=-2.816, p-value=.005, r=-.01			

The analysis result of Mann-Whitney U test on Q41 by language background (see Table 4.13) indicated that there was a significant association between participants’ language background and the statement *A language other than English should be taught as a compulsory unit in the Science course* (U=7502.5, p-value=0.005<0.05). An examination of the mean ranks indicated that the native

English speakers (Mean rank = 155.61) responded more positively to this statement than did the non-native English speakers (Mean rank = 127.31).

**Table 4.14** Mann-Whitney U test on Q42 ‘A language other than English should be taught as a compulsory unit in the Arts course.’ by language background

Mother tongue-English	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Rank
<b>1. Yes</b>	198	156.80	31047
<b>2. No</b>	94	124.80	11731
<b>Total</b>	292		
Mann-Whitney U=7266, z=-3.153, p-value=.002, r=-.02			

The analysis result of Mann-Whitney U test on Q42 by language background (see Table 4.14) indicated that there was a significant association between participants’ language background and the statement *A language other than English should be taught as a compulsory unit in the Arts course* (U=7266, p-value=0.002<0.05). An examination of the mean ranks indicated that the native English speakers (Mean rank = 156.80) responded more positively to this statement than did the non-native English speakers (Mean rank = 124.80).

#### 4.6.2 Occupation

**Table 4.15** Mann-Whitney U test on Q38 ‘A language other than English should be taught as a compulsory unit in the Nursing course.’ by occupation

Occupation	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Rank
<b>1. Student</b>	273	150.77	41159
<b>2. Teaching staff</b>	20	95.60	1912
<b>Total</b>	293		
Mann-Whitney U=1702, z=-2.937, p-value=.003, r=-.02			

The analysis result (Table 4.15) suggested that there was a statistically significant difference between the students’ and teaching staff members’ responses to Q38 (*A language other than English should be taught as a compulsory unit in the Nursing course*) (U=1702, p-value=0.003<0.05). An inspection of the mean ranks suggested that the students’ group (Mean rank = 150.77) responded more positively to this statement than did the teaching staff group (Mean rank = 95.60).

**Table 4.16 Mann-Whitney U test on Q39 'A language other than English should be taught as a compulsory unit in the Law course.' by occupation**

Occupation	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Rank
<b>1. Student</b>	273	150.76	41156.50
<b>2. Teaching staff</b>	20	95.73	1914.50
<b>Total</b>	293		
Mann- Whitney U=1704.5, z=-2.921, p-value=.003, r=-.01			

The analysis result (Table 4.16) suggested that there was a statistically significant difference between the students' and teaching staff members' responses to Q39 (*A language other than English should be taught as a compulsory unit in the Law course*) (U=1704.5, p-value=0.003<0.05). An inspection of the mean ranks suggested that the students' group (Mean rank = 150.76) responded more positively to this statement than did the teaching staff group (Mean rank = 95.73).

**Table 4.17 Mann-Whitney U test on Q40 'A language other than English should be taught as a compulsory unit in the Business/Commerce course.' by occupation**

Occupation	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Rank
<b>1. Student</b>	273	150.20	41005
<b>2. Teaching staff</b>	20	103.30	2066
<b>Total</b>	293		
Mann- Whitney U=1856, z=-2.476, p-value=.013, r=-.01			

The analysis result (Table 4.17) suggested that there was a statistically significant difference between the students' and teaching staff members' responses to Q40 (*A language other than English should be taught as a compulsory unit in the Business/Commerce course*) (U=1856, p-value=0.013<0.05). An inspection of the mean ranks suggested that the students' group (Mean rank = 150.20) responded more positively to this statement than did the teaching staff group (Mean rank = 103.30).

**Table 4.18 Mann-Whitney U test on Q41 'A language other than English should be taught as a compulsory unit in the Science course.' by occupation**

Occupation	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Rank
1. Student	273	149.69	40866.50
2. Teaching staff	20	110.23	2204.50
<b>Total</b>	293		
Mann-Whitney U=1994.5, z=-2.116, p-value=.034, r=-.01			

The analysis result (Table 4.18) suggested that there was a statistically significant difference between the students' and teaching staff members' responses to Q41 (*A language other than English should be taught as a compulsory unit in the Science course*) (U=1994.5, p-value=0.034<0.05). An inspection of the mean ranks suggested that the students' group (Mean rank = 149.69) responded more positively to this statement than did the teaching staff group (Mean rank = 110.23).

**Table 4.19 Mann-Whitney U test on Q42 'A language other than English should be taught as a compulsory unit in the Arts course.' by occupation**

Occupation	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Rank
1. Student	273	149.79	40893
2. Teaching staff	20	108.90	2178
<b>Total</b>	293		
Mann-Whitney U=1968, z=-2.171, p-value=.03, r=-.01			

The analysis result (Table 4.19) suggested that there was a statistically significant difference between the students' and teaching staff members' responses to Q42 (*A language other than English should be taught as a compulsory unit in the Arts course*) (U=1968, p-value=0.03<0.05). An inspection of the mean ranks suggested that the students' group (Mean rank = 149.79) responded more positively to this statement than did the teaching staff group (Mean rank = 108.90).

### 4.6.3 Category of students

**Table 4.20 Mann-Whitney U test on Q38 ‘A language other than English should be taught as a compulsory unit in the Nursing course.’ by category of students**

Category of students	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Rank
<b>1. International</b>	75	118.71	8903
<b>2. Domestic</b>	196	142.62	27953
<b>Total</b>	293		
Mann-Whitney U=6053, z=-2.348, p-value=.019, r=-.01			

The analysis result of the Mann-Whitney U test (see Table 4.20) indicated that there was a statistically significant difference between international and domestic students in their responses to Q38 (*A language other than English should be taught as a compulsory unit in the Nursing course*) (U=6053, p-value=0.019<0.05). A further examination of the mean ranks suggested that the domestic student group (Mean rank = 142.62) were more positive in their response than the international group (Mean rank = 118.71).

**Table 4.21 Mann-Whitney U test on Q39 ‘A language other than English should be taught as a compulsory unit in the Law course.’ by category of students**

Category of students	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Rank
<b>1. International</b>	75	119.31	8948.50
<b>2. Domestic</b>	196	142.39	27907.50
<b>Total</b>	293		
Mann-Whitney U=6098.5, z=-2.258, p-value=.024, r=-.01			

The analysis result of the Mann-Whitney U test (see Table 4.21) indicated that there was a statistically significant difference between international and domestic students in their responses to Q39 (*A language other than English should be taught as a compulsory unit in the Law course*) (U=6098.5, p-value=0.024<0.05). A further examination of the mean ranks suggested that the domestic student group (Mean rank = 142.39) responded more positively to this statement than did the international group (Mean rank = 119.31).

**Table 4.22 Mann-Whitney U test on Q40 'A language other than English should be taught as a compulsory unit in the Business/Commerce course.' by category of students**

Category of students	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Rank
<b>1. International</b>	75	113.30	8497.5
<b>2. Domestic</b>	196	144.69	28358.5
<b>Total</b>	293		
Mann-Whitney U=5647.5, z=-3.055, p-value=.002, r=-.02			

The analysis result of the Mann-Whitney U test (see Table 4.22) indicated that there was a statistically significant difference between international and domestic students in their responses to Q40 (*A language other than English should be taught as a compulsory unit in the Business/Commerce course*) (U=5647.5, p-value=0.002<0.05). A further examination of the mean ranks suggested that the domestic student group (Mean rank = 113.30) responded more positively to this statement than did the international group (Mean rank = 144.69).

**Table 4.23 Mann-Whitney U test on Q42 'A language other than English should be taught as a compulsory unit in the Arts course.' by category of students**

Category of students	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Rank
<b>1. International</b>	75	114.09	8556.5
<b>2. Domestic</b>	196	144.39	28299.5
<b>Total</b>	293		
Mann-Whitney U=5706.5, z=-2.967, p-value=.003, r=-.02			

The analysis result of the Mann-Whitney U test (see Table 4.23) indicated that there was a statistically significant difference between international and domestic students in their responses to Q41 (*A language other than English should be taught as a compulsory unit in the Arts course*) (U=5706.5, p-value=0.003<0.05). A further examination of the mean ranks suggested that the domestic student group (Mean rank = 114.09) responded more positively to this statement than did the international group (Mean rank = 144.39).

#### 4.6.4 Length of teaching

**Table 4.24** Kruskal-Wallis test on Q35 ‘Translation should be avoided in language teaching’ by length of teaching

	Years of teaching	N	Mean Rank	Median
Q35. Translation should be avoided in language teaching.	less than 2 years	3	5	3
	2-5 years	6	14.5	4
	over 5-10 years	4	13.5	4
	over 10 years	7	7.71	3
Chi-Square value = 9.502, df = 3, p-value = 0.023 < 0.05				

The analysis result of Kruskal-Wallis test on Q35 (see Table 4.24) indicated that, for teaching staff, the length of teaching at the university had an association with their response to the statement “Translation should be avoided in language teaching.” (Chi-Square value = 9.502, df = 3, p-value = 0.023 < 0.05). Follow-up Mann-Whitney U tests were then conducted between groups with different years of teaching to further identify which groups responded more favourably on this statement.

The results suggested that the following groups were found to respond differently to this statement:

- Less than 2 years and 2 to 5 years groups (U = 0.000, r = .82, p-value = 0.009 < 0.05);
- Less than 2 years and over 5 to 10 years groups (U = 0.000, r = .77, p-value = 0.014 < 0.05); and
- Two to 5 years and over 10 years groups (U = 8.000, r = .63, p-value = 0.047 < 0.05).

Furthermore, the results presented above can also be seen from the median value obtained. The groups of 2 to 5 years and over 5 to 10 years recorded a higher value (4) than the value reported by the other two groups (3). This indicated that these two groups were not in favour of the statement that “Translation should be avoided in language teaching.”

### 4.6.5 Age group

The demographic factor “age” was also selected as an independent variable to be examined for significant influence on student participants’ views on Q39, Q40, Q41 and Q42. In this study, the students within different age groups expressed diverse opinions on Q39, Q40, Q41 and Q42 (see Tables 4.25-4.29).

**Table 4.25** *Kruskal-Wallis test on Q39 ‘A language other than English should be taught as a compulsory unit in the Law course.’ by age groups*

Q39. A language other than English should be taught as a compulsory unit in the Law course.	Age	N	Mean Rank	Median
	17-23 years	201	136.58	3
	24-35 years	41	149.39	3
	36-45 years	9	159.28	4
	over 45 years	21	100.83	2
	<b>Total</b>	272		
Chi-Square value = 9.456, df = 3, p-value = 0.024 < 0.05				

The analysis result of Kruskal-Wallis test on Q39 (see Table 4.25) indicated that the age group to which students belonged had an association with their views on Q39 “A language other than English should be taught as a compulsory unit in the Law course.” (Chi-Square value = 9.456, df = 3, p-value = 0.024 < 0.05). The follow-up Mann-Whitney U tests were then conducted between age groups to further identify which groups had responded more favourably to this statement.

**Table 4.26** *Kruskal-Wallis test on Q40 ‘A language other than English should be taught as a compulsory unit in the Business/Commerce course.’ by age groups*

Q40. A language other than English should be taught as a compulsory unit in the Business/Commerce course.	Age	N	Mean Rank	Median
	17-23 years	201	134.17	3
	24-35 years	41	158.28	3
	36-45 years	9	165.39	3
	over 45 years	21	103.86	2
	<b>Total</b>	<b>272</b>		
Chi-Square value = 8.752, df = 3, p-value = 0.033 < 0.05				

The analysis result of Kruskal-Wallis test on Q40 (see Table 4.26) indicated that the age group to which students belonged had an association with their views on Q40 “A language other than English should be taught as a compulsory unit in the Business/Commerce course.” (Chi-Square value = 8.752, df = 3, p-value = 0.033 < 0.05). The follow-up Mann-Whitney U tests were then conducted between age groups to further identify which groups had responded more favourably on this statement.

**Table 4.27** *Kruskal-Wallis test on Q41 ‘A language other than English should be taught as a compulsory unit in the Science course.’ by age groups*

Q41. A language other than English should be taught as a compulsory unit in the Science course.	Age	N	Mean Rank	Median
	17-23 years	201	140.05	3
	24-35 years	41	149.21	3
	36-45 years	9	152.89	4
	over 45 years	21	70.64	2
	<b>Total</b>	<b>272</b>		
Chi-Square value = 18.35, df = 3, p-value = 0.000 < 0.05				

The analysis result of Kruskal-Wallis test on Q41 (see Table 4.27) indicated that the age group to which students belonged had an association with their views on Q41 “A language other than English should be taught as a compulsory unit in the

*Science course.*” (Chi-Square value = 18.35, df = 3, p-value = 0.000 < 0.05). The follow-up Mann-Whitney U tests were then conducted between age groups to further identify which groups had responded more favourably on this statement.

**Table 4.28** *Kruskal-Wallis test on Q42 ‘A language other than English should be taught as a compulsory unit in the Arts course.’ by age groups*

	Age	N	Mean Rank	Median
Q42. A language other than English should be taught as a compulsory unit in the Arts course.	<b>17-23 years</b>	201	133.28	3
	<b>24-35 years</b>	41	162.62	3
	<b>36-45 years</b>	9	174	4
	<b>over 45 years</b>	21	100.26	2
	<b>Total</b>	272		
Chi-Square value = 12.338, df = 3, p-value = 0.006 < 0.05				

The analysis result of Kruskal-Wallis test on Q42 (see Table 4.28) indicated that the age group to which students belonged had an association with their views on Q42 “A language other than English should be taught as a compulsory unit in the Arts course.” (Chi-Square value = 12.338, df = 3, p-value = 0.006 < 0.05). The follow-up Mann-Whitney U tests were then conducted between age groups to further identify which groups had responded more favourably on this statement.

Further support for this result is shown in Table 4.29.

Table 4.29 P-values of Q39-42

Paired groups	Q39	Q40	Q41	Q42
17-23 years	0.157	0.065	0.462	*0.023
24-35 years				
17-23 years	0.501	0.231	0.611	0.115
36-45 years				
17-23 years	*0.016	0.084	*0.000	0.055
Over 45 years				
24-35 years	0.872	0.753	0.872	0.604
36-45 years				
24-35 years	*0.002	*0.006	*0.000	*0.002
Over 45 years				
36-45 years	0.086	0.063	*0.011	*0.028
Over 45 years				
*P-value: < 0.05				

Post hoc Mann-Whitney U tests were performed to investigate which age groups were significantly different from one another. Significant differences were found between the following groups:

***In terms of Q39***

- 17 to 23 years old and over 45 years old groups ( $U = 1464.000$ ,  $r = .16$ ,  $p\text{-value} = 0.016 < 0.05$ ); and
- 24 to 35 years old and over 45 years old groups ( $U = 229.500$ ,  $r = .40$ ,  $p\text{-value} = 0.002 < 0.05$ ).

This would be considered small and medium effect size, respectively, using Cohen's (1988) criteria of .1= small effect, .3 = medium effect, .5 = large effect.

***In terms of Q40***

- 24 to 35 years old and over 45 years old groups ( $U = 1644.500$ ,  $r = .11$ ,  $p\text{-value} = 0.006 < 0.05$ ).

This would be considered a small effect size using Cohen's (1988) criteria of .1= small effect, .3 = medium effect, .5 = large effect.

***In terms of Q41***

- 17 to 23 years old and over 45 years old groups ( $U = 1026.000$ ,  $r = .27$ ,  $p\text{-value} = 0.000 < 0.05$ );
- 24 to 35 years old and over 45 years old groups ( $U = 187.500$ ,  $r = .47$ ,  $p\text{-value} = 0.000 < 0.05$ ); and
- 36 to 45 years old and over 45 years old groups ( $U = 39.000$ ,  $r = .47$ ,  $p\text{-value} = 0.011 < 0.05$ ).

This would be considered a medium to large effect size using Cohen's (1988) criteria of .1= small effect, .3 = medium effect, .5 = large effect.

***In terms of Q42***

- 17 to 23 years old and over 45 years old groups ( $U = 3228.000$ ,  $r = .14$ ,  $p\text{-value} = 0.023 < 0.05$ );
- 24 to 35 years old and over 45 years old groups ( $U = 232.500$ ,  $r = .39$ ,  $p\text{-value} = 0.002 < 0.05$ ); and
- 36 to 45 years old and over 45 years old groups ( $U = 46.500$ ,  $r = .42$ ,  $p\text{-value} = 0.028 < 0.05$ ).

This would be considered small and medium effect sizes, respectively, using Cohen (1988) criteria of .1= small effect, .3 = medium effect, .5 = large effect.

**4.7 Conclusion**

This chapter presented the detailed process and results of the quantitative data analysis related to this research. Both descriptive and inferential analyses were conducted in this study, in order to ascertain participants' views and attitudes to

issues related to intercultural awareness in foreign language teaching and learning. Influential factors and their statistical relationships to participants' responses were discovered.

The next chapter, Chapter 5, details the qualitative data analysis procedures and systematic applications of thematic analysis and grounded theory. The qualitative data derive from the last section of the questionnaire and the interview transcripts of semi-structured interviews with 26 participants. The chapter identifies the emerging themes grounded in the participants' language. Five key themes emerged and examples of interview responses will be discussed in detail. It is worth mentioning that Chapters 4 and 5 provide a descriptive presentation of data analyses and relationships. The analytic discussions of the findings and their relationship to the relevant literature, however, will be provided in Chapter 6.

## **5. Chapter 5 – Qualitative Data Analysis**

### **5.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter provided a detailed account of the process of the quantitative data analysis. This chapter will focus on the analysis of the qualitative data derived from the participants' responses to the open-ended section of the questionnaire and the interview questions.

Qualitative research differs from the traditional logical-positivistic, quantitative research in a variety of ways (Best & Kahn, 2006). It mainly focuses on in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis. In analysing qualitative data, “the challenge is to make sense of massive amount of data, reduce the volume of information, identify significant patterns, and construct a framework for communicating the essence of what the data reveal” (Patton, 1990, pp. 371-372). In other words, “the vital part of the reflections undertaken by the qualitative researcher will be the attempt to identify ‘patterns and processes, commonalities and differences.’” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 9)

As discussed in the methods chapter, research design was closely related to the overarching aims of the research. Hence, the aim of understanding the beliefs of teaching staff and students about intercultural awareness within the Tasmanian university context, impacted on the decisions for the design of the research. This research sought in-depth information on people's views – their thoughts, feelings and perceptions – which resulted in the design of this study tending more towards a qualitative approach (Burns, 2000; Strauss & Corbin, 1998a). In semi-structured interviewing, the interviewer requires focused information and asks specific questions to gain it. The use of semi-structured interviews is also congruent with grounded theory methodology as it allows the researcher to ask key questions in the same way each time, but allows flexibility in the sequencing of questions and in the depth of exploration (Fielding, 1994).

In order to make the mass of the collected qualitative data comprehensible, thematic analysis and grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006) were employed in this study. Each approach will be discussed in the following sections of this chapter.

Both methods are considered as a means of developing theory that is grounded in data that have been systematically gathered and analysed (Strauss & Corbin, 1998b). Computerised software (NVivo) was used to assist the qualitative data analysis, because this approach allows for the management of large amounts of unstructured data. In this way, meaning may be derived more easily, understandings can be communicated clearly and the thoroughness of data analysis is able to be demonstrated (Bazeley, 2003).

## 5.2 Qualitative data analysis

As introduced in Chapter 3, the interview questions were designed in relation to the five research objectives. Table 5.1 shows the details of the specific question items and the objectives they addressed.

**Table 5.1** *Research objectives, instruments and question items*

Research objectives	Instruments	Question items
<i>Objective 1:</i> views of university teaching staff and students towards the concept of intercultural awareness in general	Open-ended questionnaire section and both sets of interview questions	Open-ended question and Interview Q2, Q3
<i>Objective 2:</i> teachers and students perceptions of the significance of intercultural awareness in foreign language teaching and learning in the Tasmanian tertiary educational context	Open-ended questionnaire section and both sets of interview questions	Open-ended question and Interview Q4
<i>Objective 3:</i> intercultural experience of university teaching staff and students	Open-ended questionnaire section and both sets of interview questions	Open-ended question and Interview Q5, Q6

<i>Objective 4:</i> compared beliefs and perceptions of teaching staff and students on intercultural awareness in foreign language teaching and learning	Open-ended questionnaire section and both sets of interview questions	Open-ended question and Interview Q7, Q8
<i>Objective 5:</i> suggestions or recommendations to university policy makers for enhancing intercultural awareness in foreign language teaching and learning in the Tasmanian tertiary educational context	Open-ended questionnaire section and both sets of interview questions	Open-ended question and Interview Q9, Q10

### 5.2.1 Qualitative data analysis process

The qualitative data provided a much richer and more in-depth understanding and exploration of meanings than could be derived from the numerical data collected at the quantitative phase. As mentioned before, the challenge is not so much generating data but rather generating useful, valuable data, relevant to the question(s) being asked (Richards, 2005).

As indicated in the previous section, in order to conduct a rigorous qualitative data analysis which ultimately will be convincing and persuasive to policymakers and other researchers, both constant comparative method in grounded theory and thematic analysis, which are methodologically similar analytic frameworks, were used in this study to address the research questions. As both approaches bear similar concepts and coding process, and both aim to identify emerging patterns or themes from the data mass, they are often used in data analysis interchangeably. As mentioned in the Methods Chapter, “data analysis is a systematic search for meaning” (Hatch, 2002, p. 148) and it is through data analysis that the researcher aims to elicit the descriptions and theories, which are grounded in reality. Thus, through systematic data analyses, themes that emerged from the generated data, and the relationships identified among these themes, provided the researcher with an explicit understanding of the participants’ perceptions in relation to the issues addressed in this study, and helped to achieve the five research objectives.

However, during the process, constant comparative method was also used in the initial coding.

The stages of data analysis employed in this study were as follows: firstly, the audio recorded interviews were transcribed and the interview transcripts were combined with the participants' answers to the open-ended question in the questionnaire. Secondly, the transcripts were imported into NVivo. Thirdly, the researcher read through the responses given by both the teaching staff and the students thoroughly in order to identify emerging themes within the texts. At this stage, with the aid of several functions in NVivo – such as word frequency search, text search, and querying abilities – the researcher was able to collect and display key words and phrases and similarly-coded data for examination (Saldana, 2009), ultimately accomplishing a thorough iterative analytic process. Finally, the researcher wrote up the report based on the results.

#### ***5.2.1.1 Thematic analysis***

Thematic analysis is one of the most commonly used methods of qualitative data analysis. Essentially, thematic analysis is a categorising strategy. Researchers use thematic analysis as a way of getting close to their data and developing some deeper appreciation of the content. Thematic analysis enables the use of a wide variety of types of information in a systematic manner that increases the accuracy or sensitivity of the research and increases the researcher's understanding about people, events and situations (Boyatzis, 1998). It is the most useful method in capturing the complexities of meaning within a textual data set. Braun and Clarke (2006) argue that “thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (p. 79), and for providing a “detailed and nuanced account” (p. 83) of the identified themes.

Thematic analysis is a process of encoding qualitative information (Boyatzis, 1998). According to Boyatzis, encoding can be theory driven, prior research driven, or data driven. For this study, data driven coding was used with the aim of reflecting the meanings contained within the raw data as closely as possible (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis requires involvement and interpretation by the researcher. Researchers review their data, make notes

and start to sort them into categories. Thematic analysis helps researchers move their analysis from a broad reading of the data towards discovering patterns and themes.

In thematic analysis, “a theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question and represents some level of patterned responses or meaning within the data set” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 82). Themes are likely to be discovered through engagement with the literature, prior experience of the researcher, and the nature of the research question (O’Leary, 2004). In relation to the process of engagement with the transcripts and texts that make up a researcher’s raw data, O’Leary (2004) asserts that this textual engagement can happen at a number of levels: “qualitative data can be explored from the words that are used, the concepts that are discussed, the linguistic devices that are called upon, and the non-verbal cues noted by the researcher.” (O’Leary, 2004, p. 196)

Moreover, in thematic analysis, the task of the researcher is to identify a set of themes or categories that adequately reflect the collected textual data. As with all qualitative analysis, it is important that the researcher is very familiar with the data if the analysis is to be insightful. Thus data familiarisation is a key to thematic analysis as it is to other qualitative methods. The following is Braun and Clarke’s (2006, p. 87) step-by-step guide to the six phases of conducting thematic analysis:

- Becoming familiar with the data;
- Generating initial codes;
- Searching for themes;
- Reviewing themes;
- Defining and naming themes; and
- Producing the report.

#### **5.2.1.2 Grounded theory**

The second qualitative analytic method used in this study was constant comparative method in grounded theory. According to Glaser and Strauss’s (1967) principles of grounded theory, theory emerges from the data in qualitative

research. Grounded theory is a method that aims to generate theory from data reflecting the lived experiences of research participants. Grounded theory is a set of inductive and iterative techniques designed to identify categories within text that are then linked into formal theoretical models (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998b). Charmaz (2006) later described grounded theory as a set of methods that “consist of systematic, yet flexible guidelines for collecting and analysing qualitative data to construct theories ‘grounded’ in the data themselves” (p. 2). Grounded theory is mainly used to identify key themes and subthemes from interview data, in the process of which central themes become evident.

This study used grounded theory in order to investigate teaching staff and students’ perceptions and experiences of intercultural awareness in foreign language teaching and learning in the University of Tasmania. For this study, in adopting a constructivist grounded theory approach to data analysis, as described by Charmaz (2006), the constructivist researcher acknowledges that the theory that results is an interpretation, dependent on the researcher’s approach and perspective (Charmaz, 2006). The purpose of grounded theory is “theory construction, rather than description or application of existing theories” (Charmaz & Bryman, 2011, p. 292).

One of the most commonly used qualitative data analysis techniques is constant comparative analysis, developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967). The application of constant comparative method is a fundamental feature of grounded theory. The idea behind these contrasts and comparisons is to try to bring out what is distinctive about the text and its content (Gibbs, 2007). This method involves comparing like with like, to look for emerging patterns and themes as comparison explores differences and similarities across incidents within the data set (Goulding, 1999). The constant comparative analytic procedure is broken into units of analysis, for example, a line of text or a paragraph or more. Then, the interpreted meanings among units come to be represented as categories. As the number of categories increase, the data are constantly compared, leading to more abstract categories until a central or core category is conceptualised. When it reaches the point that the categories are declared “saturated” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) the

researcher can bring the study to an end. In terms of this study, in order to identify the participants' main concerns, the researcher incorporated the constant comparative method to code and analyse the transcript data. Comparing incident with incident, code with code and, later, subtheme with subtheme, resulted in the emergence of major themes and the development of preliminary concepts.

### ***5.2.1.3 Coding process***

Burns (2000) states that the first stage in analysing the interview data is coding, that is classifying material into themes, issues, topics, concepts and propositions. "Coding gives the researcher a condensed, abstract view with scope and dimension that encompasses otherwise seemingly disparate phenomena" (Bryman & Charmaz, 2007, p. 266). Coding is the essential step of a thematic analysis. Additionally, coding is central to grounded theory, enabling the researcher to build rather than test theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998b). It is an analytic process through which concepts are identified and their properties and dimensions are discovered in the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998b). Similarly, Gibbs (2007) argues that coding is a fundamental analytic process for many types of qualitative research: "It consists of identifying one or more passages of text that exemplify some thematic idea and linking them with a code" (p. 54). Moreover, Richards (2005) succinctly states that "coding is not merely to label all the parts of documents about a topic, but rather to bring them together so they can be reviewed, and [the researcher's] thinking about the topic developed" (p. 86). Moreover, Charmaz (2006) asserts that "coding is the pivotal link between collecting data and developing an emergent theory to explain these data." (p. 46)

Generally speaking, coding involves the breaking down, analysis, comparison, and categorisation of data. As mentioned earlier, the data management tool NVivo was used in this study because it is well suited to this type of analysis. It allows the researcher to manage text data that may be unstructured, assisting with the processes of indexing, searching, and theorising and also helps the researcher to examine features and relationships in texts (Creswell, 2005; Gibbs, 2002). As Burns (2000) points out in relation to NVivo software, "from the coding it will search for links among the codes and build a hierarchical network of code patterns, categories and relationships in the original data" (p. 437). It is a tool that enables a

researcher to demonstrate the integrity, robustness and, therefore, trustworthiness of an investigation (Smyth, 2006). In this study, several methods were used to identify major themes emerging from the data and to search for connections with the aid of NVivo. These themes were then refined during the analysis of the data, with data being linked by recognising substantive rather than formal relations between things (Dey, 1998). This type of approach was made to gain a deeper understanding of the dimensions of individual learners' experiences in real life contexts from their own words (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Morse & Richards, 2002; Strauss & Corbin, 1998a).

Saldana (2009) argues that “qualitative inquiry demands meticulous attention to language and deep reflection on the emergent patterns and meanings of human experience” (p. 10). Therefore, he describes coding as a cyclical act. Rarely is the first cycle of coding data perfectly attempted. The second cycle and possibly the third and fourth “of recoding further manages, filters, highlights, and focuses the salient features of the qualitative data record for generating categories, themes, and concepts, grasping meanings and building theory” (Saldana, 2009, p. 8). There is a diverse repertoire of coding methods generally applied in qualitative data analysis. This study adopted thematic analysis procedures and three cycles of coding were undertaken: initial coding, focused coding and theoretical coding (Charmaz, 2006; Saldana, 2009, 2011).

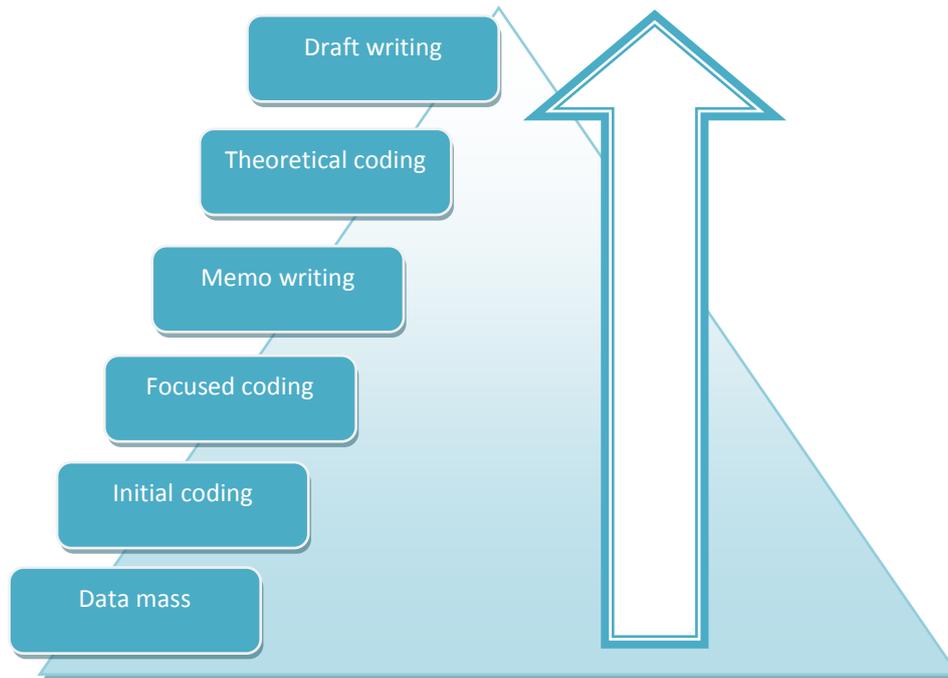
The first coding cycle was initial or open coding, performed in the initial stage, in order to discover, name and categorise phenomena (Strauss & Corbin, 1998a). In other words, it is used to identify key words or phrases which connect the informant's account to the experience under investigation (Goulding, 1999). It is an opportunity for a researcher to reflect deeply on the contents and nuances of the data and to begin taking ownership of them (Saldana, 2009). Charmaz (2006) advises that detailed, line-by-line initial coding is suitable for interview transcripts. Therefore, with computer-aided qualitative data analysis software NVivo (Version 10.0), the researcher read the transcripts word by word, line by line, incident to incident, and then dragged and dropped the relevant meaning units into the same coding group. This method also “permits the researcher to shift quickly back and forth between multiple analytic tasks, such as coding, analytic memo writing, and

exploring patterns in progress” (Saldana, 2009, p. 26). At this stage, constant comparison was applied as open codes need to be constantly compared in order to generate a conceptual code (Goulding, 1999). The researcher remained open to the raw data without having developed any pre-conceived codes (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992).

Following the first cycle of coding, the second cycle of coding, focused coding was undertaken. According to Charmaz (2006, p. 57), “focused coding means using the most significant and/or frequent earlier codes to sift through large amounts of data.” The researcher searches for the most frequent or significant initial codes to develop the most salient categories in the data corpus and requires decisions about which initial codes make the most analytic sense (Charmaz, 2006; Saldana, 2009). The goal of this method is to develop categories, without distracting attention to their properties and dimensions, and to build and clarify a category by examining all the data and their variations (Charmaz, 2006; Saldana, 2009).

The final cycle is theoretical coding, which involves a process of integrating and refining the categories into theories. All categories and subcategories now become systematically linked with the central/core category, the one that appears to have the greatest explanatory relevance for the phenomenon (Saldana, 2009; Strauss & Corbin, 1998b). Theoretical coding integrates and synthesizes the categories derived from coding and analysis to create a theory (Saldana, 2009). This coding cycle eventually progresses analysis to a conceptual level. At this cycle, categories developed from initial and focused coding can be applicable to all cases in the study (Saldana, 2009). It is crucial to keep in mind that “the purpose and outcome of data analysis is to reveal to others through fresh insights what [has been] observed and discovered about the human condition” (Saldana, 2011, p. 89).

Figure 5.1 demonstrates how the qualitative data is analysed in a systematic way.



*Figure 5.1* Qualitative data analytic process

Both thematic analysis and constant comparative method present challenges for the researcher. For example, both methods demand the researcher’s time and energy (Boyatzis, 1998). In addition, the researcher is the main tool for analysis (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000), meaning that the software used in the process of analysis does not actually code the data; that task remains the responsibility of the researcher (Saldana, 2009). For this study, data were coded, themes were identified, theories were built and analysis undertaken by the researcher, and then discussed with research supervisors. The next two sections discuss analysis in relation to sections of the research instruments: open-ended questionnaire section and semi-structured interview questions.

### **5.2.2 Open-ended questionnaire section**

In order to get additional comments, there was an open-ended question included at the end of the questionnaire. Open-ended questions have the purpose of eliciting a wider range of possible responses from participants than is possible from closed questions, and consequently may provide information that is unanticipated (Merriam & Simpson, 2000). Only one question was asked in this section: “Any other relevant information you wish to add?” Unfortunately, there were not many responses to this question; only 27 respondents (1 staff/26 students) provided a

response to this question, with all the answers in handwritten format. However, despite the spelling and grammatical errors and differences in handwriting and difficulties in understanding a few of the answers, most were easy to comprehend.

Overall, responses from the participants completing the survey suggested that respondents found it valuable and stimulating to integrate cultural awareness into foreign language teaching and learning. For instance, one survey participant expressed the view that having a cultural side to language learning was hugely beneficial to his understanding of world culture. Moreover, the results of the analysis of qualitative data generated from the combination of the open-ended questions and the semi-structured interview data are discussed in details in the results section.

### **5.2.3 Semi-structured interview questions**

#### ***5.2.3.1 Participants' backgrounds***

A total of 26 respondents including 17 students and 9 teaching staff who were studying or working at Arts Faculty of the University of Tasmania from July 2010 to June 2011 participated in semi-structured interviews. Two versions of the interview schedule were prepared for students and staff, respectively, to explore perceptions of intercultural awareness in foreign language teaching and learning. The conversations between the researcher and the participants were guided by the pre-determined semi-structured interview schedule.

Among the 9 staff participants, 1 each was from Chinese, French and Indonesian language programs; 2 were from German language program; and 4 were from Japanese language program. A total of 17 language students were interviewed in this study. Demographic information on the interview participants are summarised in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2 *Participants of semi-structured interviews*

	n/N	%
<b>Staff (N=9)</b>		
<b>Language(s) taught</b>		
- Chinese	1/9	11.1
- French	1/9	11.1
- Indonesian	1/9	11.1
- German	2/9	22.2
- Japanese	4/9	44.5
<b>Gender</b>		
- Male	5/9	55.6
- Female	4/9	44.5
<b>Students (N=17)</b>		
<b>Language(s) studied</b>		
- Chinese and Japanese	2/17	11.8
- French	3/17	17.6
- Indonesian	10/17	58.8
- German	1/17	5.9
- Japanese	1/17	5.9
<b>Gender</b>		
- Male	6/17	35.3
- Female	11/17	64.7

As mentioned earlier, first, the researcher used constant comparison, which involves the labelling, or through the first cycle of coding of data to help identify higher-level concepts (Goulding, 1999). The process then moved onto more sophisticated levels, which are the second and third cycle of coding, during which analytic skills such as classifying, integrating, abstracting, and conceptualising were applied to find out the deeper relationships among those codes generated from the first cycle coding. Along with the identified relationship, hierarchical structures were established and themes then gradually emerged from the data set. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), “a theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned responses or meaning within the data set” (p. 82). Boyatzis (1998) similarly states that themes are extended phrases or sentences that summarise the manifest (apparent) and latent (underlying) meaning of data. In qualitative research, the term “theme” is often used interchangeably with such words as category, domain, phrase, unit of analysis (Saldana, 2009). The analytic goal is “to winnow down the number of themes to explore a report, and to develop an

‘overarching theme’ from the data corpus, or an ‘integrative theme’ that weaves various themes together into a coherent narrative” (Saldana, 2009, pp. 139-140).

As the research unfolded, all of the collected data were coded and analysed to look for themes and connections. Once coding had been completed, a number of sub-themes were identified as related codes were combined. Relationships between codes were perceived and labelled as sub-themes. Relationships between sub-themes were then observed and drawn into main themes. Themes were refined and defined through a process of reviewing the relationships between sub-themes and more importantly through a process of identifying what was of significance in the coded data. At the end of the coding process, 5 themes and 13 sub-themes were constructed from participants’ responses to the open-ended question section and semi-structured interview questions (see the detailed node chart shown in Appendix K). The term node is used to refer to the place where the software stores a category (Richards, 2005).

### **5.3 Results**

Five broad themes are presented here in terms of what the participants recognised as significant outcomes of their engagement with foreign language teaching and learning. The remainder of this chapter is devoted to a detailed discussion of the 5 key themes and 13 sub-themes that emerged from the data. The five major themes include:

- Theme 1: Interpretation of intercultural awareness.
- Theme 2: Significance of intercultural awareness.
- Theme 3: Experiences relating to intercultural awareness.
- Theme 4: Attitudes towards intercultural awareness.
- Theme 5: Strategies to enhance intercultural awareness.

### 5.3.1 Theme 1: Interpretation of intercultural awareness

Table 5.3 *Interpretation of intercultural awareness*

Theme 1: Interpretation of intercultural awareness	
<b>Sub-theme 1:</b>	Conceptualisation of intercultural awareness
<b>Sub-theme 2:</b>	Personal understandings of intercultural awareness
<b>Sub-theme 3:</b>	Acculturation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cultural background and upbringing</li> <li>• Social and cultural challenges of inclusion</li> </ul>

In regard to the first key theme, interpretation of intercultural awareness, the participants demonstrated their understanding of this concept from three different perspectives: self-explanatory concept, personal understandings about intercultural awareness and acculturation (see Table 5.3).

#### 5.3.1.1 *Sub-theme 1: Conceptualisation of intercultural awareness*

Overall, there is general agreement among the participants on this point. Basically in the view of participants, intercultural awareness means an understanding and appreciation of cultural differences. The key elements are acceptance, respect and tolerance. Apart from their general agreement, the participants also tended to give explanations and examples of intercultural awareness from their own perspectives. For instance, one staff participant commented as follows:

*First of all you should acknowledge there are differences and secondly there are different people surrounding you in social and cultural settings, and thirdly it is to respect and be tolerant and willing to learn. (Staff 1)*

Another staff participant chose a different way to explain intercultural awareness:

*It means a collection of skills and attitudes that help to interpret understand and relate to people of a culture other than your own. (Staff 4)*

In addition, the following comments given by two student participants provide relatively detailed explanations of their understandings:

*Intercultural awareness to me means being aware of the different behaviours and underlying patterns in society that are different between cultures. Having that sort of awareness instilled in you, you get to appreciate what you have and also other people's cultures. (Student 11)*

*It's also a bi-directional thing – it's those people in those countries understanding about my culture, Australian culture, and the western culture. It's definitely two ways. (Student 2)*

It is interesting that one staff participant proposed the definition of intercultural awareness in a very unique way, appearing to summarise the comments above.

*It is relatively self-explanatory in the words itself. It's difficult to define it without restating the words within there, but it would be an awareness of different cultures, and how different cultures would work together and combine together, and how the significance of the cultures, of each of the cultures within each of the other separate culture. (Staff 2)*

Equally important, another staff participant demonstrated the definition of intercultural awareness from the perspective of a university staff member as follows:

*Especially in the university environment, there are more and more international students coming in, and Australia itself is generally defined as a multicultural society. So I think tertiary educated students generally have the responsibility to carry this kind of intercultural awareness to wherever they end up in the workforce or in their social community networks and interactions. (Staff 1)*

From the above statements, it can be seen that people from different backgrounds, both personal and professional, give different interpretations of intercultural awareness.

**5.3.1.2 Sub-theme 2: Personal understandings of intercultural awareness**

Based on their individual cultural backgrounds, it is of great interest to explore the participants' perceptions of intercultural awareness from their personal and professional perspectives. Here are some profound remarks from both staff and student participants:

*It's extremely complicated. It is that knowledge and ability people have, to deal with all of the non-linguistic or extra-linguistic ways that we communicate with each other. But it's the broader context of meaning, and how human beings get meaning across to each other – or fail to get meaning across to each other. It's the awareness of that broader world of meaning that I think is intercultural awareness. (Staff 5)*

*It is acknowledged that there are different cultures out there, knowing how to handle them, as in meeting different people, and also just being open to learning about different cultures and how they work in their particular cultures. (Student 5)*

*Because there is growing globalisation, it's important to have an awareness of other cultures. As a school teacher, especially, I have students from other countries in my classroom, and being aware of their culture is important. (Student 6)*

Additionally, it is worth mentioning that one of the student participants demonstrated his/her interpretation of intercultural awareness vividly by quoting a Native American proverb as follows:

*'Walk a mile in my shoes' – putting yourself in the shoes of someone else, and that's always a difficult thing to do, but one of the big things is to open your heart, and to be open to the possibility of differences, and not being closed to the view that my way is right, and therefore your way is wrong. (Student 7)*

Equally importantly, another student participant emphasised that:

*A person is a person and a human first and foremost. Hence, that's what intercultural awareness is – it's by recognising what basic humanness is, and that everything else is informed by experiences, and putting them on an equal level rather than in a hierarchical position. (Student 8)*

### **5.3.1.3 Sub-theme 3: Acculturation**

A further sub-theme within Theme 1 is acculturation. Acculturation is now a term commonly used in discussions about immigrants and refugees. In its simplest sense, acculturation is the dual process of cultural and psychological change that takes place as a result of contact between two or more cultural groups and their individual members (Berry, 2005). Similarly, Gibson (2001) states that acculturation refers to changes that take place as a result of contact with culturally dissimilar people, groups, and social influence.

Two aspects this sub-theme emerged from the qualitative data analysis: cultural background and upbringing, and social and cultural challenges of inclusion.

5 of the 25 participants acknowledged that their multicultural upbringing played an important role in forming their views on intercultural awareness. Participants in the interview described different ways that people behave and think, and practise their cultures. One staff participant believed that “*things that are of different significance to groups of people*” (Staff 2). Two other student participants also stressed this point by stating the following:

*Being brought up in a different culture and society gives people a whole different worldview, a whole different lens on reality, and so that informs the way that people do things in the culture in which they grow up. (Student 4)*

*You have to be alert to the fact that people might think or feel differently from you, because of their past experiences, and because their society is different from yours. (Student 7)*

Other significant aspects of acculturation were the social and cultural challenges of inclusion. In this study, both staff and student participants who were not born in

Australia, mentioned their experiences of being discriminated against by people from other cultural backgrounds. One staff participant was discriminated against because of who she was when she was little.

### 5.3.2 Theme 2: Significance of intercultural awareness

Table 5.4 Significance of intercultural awareness

Theme 2: Significance of intercultural awareness
<p><b>Sub-theme 1:</b> Linguistic relativity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High relevance</li> <li>• Medium relevance</li> <li>• Low relevance</li> </ul>
<p><b>Sub-theme 2:</b> Language empowerment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Linguistic proficiency</li> <li>• Linguistic inadequacy</li> </ul>

The second theme to emerge from the data analysis is the significance of intercultural awareness (see Table 5.4). The results showed that there were no differences between teaching staff and student participants. That is, on this issue, all the participants reached a consensus on the view of intercultural awareness. They strongly believed that intercultural awareness is of great importance both personally and professionally. As the following two student participants stated:

*Intercultural awareness is very crucial in every individual. Knowing about different cultures, and knowing culture through languages, is a very crucial component of everyone's life. (Student 13)*

*It's breaking down the barriers, and like I say it's important for work – and even in the class, we have quite a diverse range, and seeing how people learn – and that's quite important for the awareness. (Student 13)*

Moreover, there was also a high agreement among all the participants that language and culture are closely related. The findings in this part emphasised the strong relationship between culture and language. In fact, the prevalent

assumption was that language proficiency is beyond the basics of language. This is illustrated by the following notable comments:

*There are lots of other things around those basics of language, and that's where intercultural awareness comes in. It often meshes with language, but it's not dependent on it. (Staff 5)*

*Culture is a term that encompasses almost everything. One of the parts of culture is language, it is a part of culture, but it is not culture by itself. (Staff 3)*

*Language being the vehicle of communication, and communication being the way that we know other human beings, language is central to true intercultural awareness. (Staff 4)*

*Understanding meaning as well as the intention behind that meaning, so it's not only understanding in terms of vocabulary, it's understanding in a whole lot of terms. (Student 7)*

The significance of cultural awareness theme mainly relates to two aspects: linguistic relativity and language empowerment. Linguistic relativity is sometimes also referred to as the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis (Sapir, 1966; Whorf, 1956). According to Piller (2010), different languages sometimes offer different concepts for perceiving and experiencing the world around us. That is to say, different languages lead people to see and interpret the world in different ways.

Language as a tool for empowerment presents humanity with a unique perspective, which is accessible only to those who speak it. Any new language in which a person attains proficiency broadens that person's social, economic and cultural horizons in quite a profound way. Trying to internalise the intricacies of a non-mother tongue is enlightening and empowering.

### **5.3.2.1 Sub-theme 1: Linguistic relativity**

All of the participants believed that language and culture are embedded in each other and affect one another. Evidence of participants' beliefs is introduced below:

*The two go together – so learning the language means that you can understand the culture better, and learning about the culture means that the language makes more sense – so they are very intertwined. (Survey student participant 08)*

*Having a cultural side of language learning would greatly benefit and help us to better learn the new target language. (Student 11)*

*The culture and the language interrelate. There's no other way for you – if you don't know the language, you don't know the culture, because after all the language was made from this beautiful culture. The two things must be dealt with together, rather than having two separate things. (Student 13)*

These comments from participants support the view that language and culture are intertwined and interrelated. As discussed earlier in the literature chapter, teaching languages without the cultural context has been proven to be the least effective method of teaching and is therefore not to be recommended. This is also supported by a study that linguists conducted in the 1970s in Quebec, Canada. The study found that a learner who is keen about the target culture will be more successful in their language studies. Moreover, the culturally curious students will be more receptive to the language and more open to forming relationships with native speakers (Billy, 1980). Two student participants pointed out:

*Particularly if you think of wanting to later on do translating and interpreting, then clearly you have to have an understanding of cultural situations and differences, because it is often reflected through language – the way people communicate and the way they learn, and it is quite interesting because there are particularly things that perhaps even what we've learned in text, but it has some sort of traditional meaning, or it's something that makes you think 'why would you say it like that, why is it implied like that?' because that is something that relates to some cultural understanding that is then reflected through language. (Student 13)*

*It's important in terms of learning about a language, so you should learn a bit about the culture as well. I prefer to get that from a hands-on experience rather than trying to receive that information in a lecture format. (Student 6)*

### 5.3.2.2 *Sub-theme 2: Language empowerment*

Another significant aspect described in the data was the willingness to communicate with people from different cultures by using the target languages. The overwhelming majority of the participants considered this aspect first and foremost. A recurring subtheme within language empowerment is the sense of achievement that attached to the development of skills in communication and successful attempts to communicate in target languages. One staff participant mentioned his early working experience in the target country by saying, *“being able to understand and communicate, and being able to talk to people in the culture, and them not realising that you are not ‘one of them’, actually to that stage of feeling that you were ‘one of them’ in a superficial sense”* (Staff 2). In addition, one student participant shared his view: *“It was pretty amazing for me for the first time when I helped someone to use the telephone because I’d communicated with somebody from outside in a language which was not native to either of us.”* (Student 2)

While communicating with people from different cultures, language learners should respect other cultures, possess the motivation to communicate with people regardless of their cultures and build up confidence and social understanding. As one student participant commented:

*It’s a huge thing, and it’s that aspect of not just the meaning of words, but the intention behind them – and language carries a whole culture behind it, not just dictionary meanings of words – and unless that comes across, or you can go to a country and use a language – it’s a beginning, and to learn those words, how to use them in sentences and string them together with the right grammar, this gives you the possibility of communication with someone in that culture – it’s the first step, and you learn quickly enough if your heart, ear and eyes are open – but it’s the first step, the communication – and the willingness to communicate. It’s a lovely thing.* (Student 7)

To add further depth to this point, the next major theme will illustrate some examples in detail.

### 5.3.3 Theme 3: Experiences relating to intercultural awareness

Table 5.5 Experiences relating to intercultural awareness

Theme 3: Experiences relating to intercultural awareness
<p><b>Sub-theme 1:</b> Professional experiences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive experiences</li> <li>• Negative experiences</li> <li>• Challenging experiences</li> </ul>
<p><b>Sub-theme 2:</b> Personal experiences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive experiences</li> <li>• Negative experiences</li> <li>• Challenging experiences</li> </ul>

Several salient themes emerged from this part of the analysis, which can be seen as reflecting understandings or awareness acquired by the participants through their experiences relating to intercultural awareness. The result of the data analysis showed that there were two aspects responded to by the participants: professional experiences and personal experiences, both including positive experiences, negative experiences and challenging experiences (see Table 5.5). In terms of negative experiences relating to intercultural awareness, three staff participants in this study consider that racism exists in Tasmania and they had experienced racial discriminations in varying degrees. Racial discrimination is a sensitive and unavoidable issue that is commonly discussed within intercultural contexts.

One staff participant stated that: *“Most people, probably at the heart are fairly racist people, and it’s so ingrained in the language that people use”* (Staff 2). Further, one student participant agreed with this viewpoint, stating that *“there are the typical Aussies that are very close-minded and quite racist, and there was someone in a pub that told an Asian looking person to go back home”* (Student 5).

However, another student participant who had been treated differently overseas believed otherwise.

*There is less actual racism and people in Australia are more tolerant. They may not know so much about the countries where people come from, their cultural awareness is not so great, but they are more tolerant. (Student 2)*

One significant aspect within professional and personal experiences relating to intercultural awareness was that of challenging experiences. Two student participants spoke about their own experiences.

*The Arab community is very challenging, because their biggest cultural problems are between men and women, and for me in the position I'm in, to tell a male who is Saudi Arabian, is not – well, you have to find ways to get around that, so we have been taught to say, 'the university policy is for you to do this and this and this' – so you take the command away from being you, to being a policy – so those kinds of things are challenging, but they are also beneficial – because you get the same outcome. (Student 14)*

*Going to places and not being able to understand what was going on, or what I was supposed to do – and people assuming that you understood how things work, when you didn't. (Student 11)*

Interestingly, another student participant claimed that “*a positive but challenging one is acclimatising to – in my experience of Chinese culture, people can be more direct without hurting people, whereas I don't know why, but in our culture we're so easily hurt, even by people just saying things to show concern*” (Student 9).

Apart from the negative and challenging intercultural experiences mentioned above, participants also shared a great deal of positive ones. Some of them even mentioned that sometimes negative experiences may also become a positive influence if handled properly. For instance, one staff participant reflected on his first intercultural experience and acknowledged that, despite the difficulties at the beginning, he considered the total deep cultural experience of assimilating into a local community as his best experience in life. Moreover, one student participant who had similar experience echoed this by stating:

*Those experiences that are quite confronting, and having to deal with it – it is good in a way because it helps you to be understanding, and realising*

*that not everyone is the same way. To be accepting people and not judging them – it has become a positive out of a negative. (Student 3)*

In addition, as far as in-country language study as an ideal model is concerned, the participants all had high agreement on the benefits of studying abroad. The most beneficial aspect mentioned by the participants was the dynamic learning experience.

One student participant strongly encouraged people “*to go out into the world, use that language, and explore. You can’t learn a language just from going along to a tutorial. You have to do the in country programs, or live and work in that country, or interact with people from that country.*” (Student 2)

Another student participant particularly reflected on her journey of learning Chinese. “*Especially with learning Chinese, it’s made me learn how little I know, and how much I want to know, to get beyond the putting together the right grammar and the right words – so it’s given me more of a hunger to learn. Like learning Chinese has given me a yearning, because I’ve seen so much beauty in the language, and the language reflects the culture – it has to.*” (Student 7)

In summary, all the lived experiences shared by the participants showed that learning a language is seen as a challenge, an adventure, and a new world to explore. As two student participants mentioned this aspect in their responses: “*It was a holistic experience that incorporated an entire life change*” (Student 8). “*Learning a language is about discovering a world, it’s not just about mastering a technique – it is about learning to know a world I didn’t know before*” (Student 9).

#### **5.3.4 Theme 4: Attitudes towards intercultural awareness**

**Table 5.6** *Attitudes towards intercultural awareness*

<b>Theme 4: Attitudes towards intercultural awareness</b>
<b>Sub-theme 1:</b> Attitudinal changes
<b>Sub-theme 2:</b> Attitudinal consistency

In this study, the participants were invited to evaluate the changes in their attitudes and perspectives on intercultural awareness as a skill, and to share their views with the researcher. An analysis of attitudes expressed by the participants revealed a mix of perceptions and several major recurring themes. Two salient aspects within Theme 4 “attitudes towards intercultural awareness” emerged, including attitudinal changes and attitudinal consistency (see Table 5.6). Generally, participants agreed that having a positive attitude towards intercultural awareness was very important.

#### **5.3.4.1 Sub-theme 1: Attitudinal changes**

While the participants shared their changed attitudes about intercultural awareness, they were also asked to describe a particular experience that contributed to their changed attitudes. Three staff participants responses are typical of those coded to this sub-theme:

*What I have realised since teaching language in Australia is that intercultural awareness is not just about introducing the cultural and political background of this particular language to the students, but it's also incorporating my students' own experience and background into learning language. (Staff 1)*

*The key things that have changed is just that what's possible here in the classroom, and for students in terms of what they can choose, has become more limited, and what's possible in terms of what they can do in country has actually expanded. You start realising when you're in the class trying to teach particular things, that if you don't have the cultural context around it, they can't make sense of this. (Staff 5)*

*Before teaching languages, this was more of an abstract concept, but by teaching your students, you see people in front of you are changing, it became more of a concrete, 'here and now' thing, rather than abstract things. (Staff 6)*

From the comments above, it can be seen that the teaching staff had a clear understanding about how teaching foreign languages has affected their way of

thinking and has reshaped their attitudes towards intercultural awareness. Several student participants shared the same opinions on this issue. This was supported by the following statements:

*I've changed a lot, having lived in China, everything that I've done from learning, taking the day as it goes, these are all things that I've learned, having lived in a place that's so busy, so vibrant, yet it's so humble in a way. You don't understand it until you actually live in the country, eat with the people, and know what it's like. (Student 13)*

*It's only when you start to learn a language that you start to come across the concrete examples that show you where the differences lie. (Student 4)*

*It gives the learning of the language more depth, and it's not just isolated – like learning the characters – you are getting to understand the process that leads up to that, and everything is put together, and it becomes more meaningful. (Student 6)*

*It changed gradually over time, and the most significant change is that I have a much more conscious awareness of different cultures ... definitely more sensitivity too, but I think that sensitivity is very different – I think you can have sensitivity towards a culture without really being conscious of it. So sensitivity has definitely increased, which is fantastic. Going from my own experience, one of the key things that has enabled me to develop intercultural awareness is studying and investigating my own culture. (Student 9)*

However, another student participant put it in quite a philosophical way:

*I wouldn't say that they have changed – it's just that they have broadened. I've become far more aware of the situations that do exist – and the reason it's been broadened since I've learned the language is because I've had more communication with people from different backgrounds. It's those experiences that have helped me to broaden my understanding. (Student 3)*

### 5.3.4.2 *Sub-theme 2: Attitudinal consistency*

The data also showed that, for quite a number of the participants in this study, there were no significant changes in their attitudes. This suggested that their attitudes towards intercultural awareness had remained consistent to those held prior to their language teaching/learning. To further understand the factors that might have impacted the participants' views towards intercultural awareness, some of adjustments they made to integrate intercultural awareness in foreign language teaching and learning were explored. Evidence of this was introduced below:

*I still find that it's only by having the discipline to study a language that I started to seek out more literature to read from that cultural and linguistic realm. (Student 4)*

### 5.3.5 **Theme 5: Strategies to enhance intercultural awareness**

**Table 5.7** *Strategies to enhance intercultural awareness*

Theme 5: Strategies to enhance intercultural awareness	
<b>Sub-theme 1:</b>	Current adopting approaches
<b>Sub-theme 2:</b>	Evaluation of integration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Satisfactory</li> <li>• Neutral</li> <li>• Unsatisfactory</li> </ul>
<b>Sub-theme 3:</b>	Future suggestions
<b>Sub-theme 4:</b>	Staff and students' expectations

Participants were all invited to give their suggestions and comments on the current and prospective adoptions of integrating intercultural awareness into language teaching and learning. The purpose of this was to invite reflections about study strategies and approaches and to identify what the participants perceived as being crucial to their language learning. Through the data analysis, the theme of strategies to enhance cultural sensitivity emerged from participants' responses.

There were four aspects mentioned by the participants, including current adopting approaches, evaluation of integration, future suggestions, and staff and students' expectations (see Table 5.7). In the next sections, both suggestions and expectations are discussed in more detail.

#### **5.3.5.1 Sub-theme 1: Current adopting approaches**

It was interesting that all the participants, especially teaching staff held a general consensus of views on the current approaches. To their minds, there were limits in terms of time and resources. This raised the issue of what could be done in the classroom or within the timeline. As a result, the current course design had become a concern among nearly all staff participants. Due to restrictions, there was no time for teaching staff to incorporate a cultural component into traditional classroom language teaching, as they would have preferred. As one staff participant wrote in the questionnaire open-ended section: *“Important as they are, a crowded curriculum does not allow as much of cultural components I would have liked to have to be covered in the units I teach or have taught”* (Staff 1).

Two staff participants supported this opinion:

*There is only so much that we're allowed to teach because of load issues. I don't see time constraints changing, and I don't see the amount of grammar that we need to teach changing – just “rule” grammar, so in that sense I don't see an awful lot changing. Because it is an intensive course, that would theoretically combine a couple of years of what they do in colleges, and take it beyond that, you've got your hands full with trying to teach all of that within the timeframe.* (Staff 2)

*The way that the BA is structured doesn't allow us to do that and I hope that there would be more contact hours – but I doubt it, because it's expensive: the more contact hours you have, the more expensive it is.* (Staff 3)

In addition, a student participant echoed a need to increase teaching hours.

*I have to be really honest that the contact hours at the university is not enough, we should have more contact hours.* (Student 13)

### 5.3.5.2 *Sub-theme 2: Evaluation of integration*

With regard to evaluations of integration in the existing delivery, one response from a survey participant as well as one student interview participant clearly indicated the benefit of including a cultural component in a first-year language program:

*I think cultural history is also a useful component to learn as part of a language course. I really enjoy listening to the little section we had on the history last year. That was quite valuable, and you could actually bring that more into today's world. (Survey participant 12)*

*Learning about the intercultural differences between Australia and China, so that is really well done. (Student 6)*

Moreover, another student participant expressed her extreme satisfaction with the teaching team:

*To me, a teacher is for eternity, because we are lucky enough to have teachers who know the culture, who talk to us about their parents, their family, their lives, and if this teacher can give you the spark, that spark of life, that spark of making you want to learn – and that's what the teachers here have done. They've all brought that enthusiasm and energy, and that's all I can say. If the teacher sparks you – lights up your mind and your heart, and your desire to know more. (Student 7)*

Further on the topic of whether or not a cultural component should be embedded in the language courses, one student participant stated, *I think it should go hand in hand with the language. It can be in a small way to introduce it, a small token each time, but you can't have the language without the culture – it doesn't exist"* (Student 7).

### 5.3.5.3 *Sub-theme 3: Future suggestions*

Many of the participants put forward a variety of creative and innovative ideas in response to the request for suggestions as to what would enhance future language teaching and learning. This is a result that deserved further attention. Firstly, most

participants were in favour of an in-country program: *“Once you get them in country, particularly if you’ve already given them the beginnings – again it’s this issue of you give them the tools, you give them the sensitivity, and then they develop it” (Staff 4).*

However, some concerns were raised by other participants, such as the cost of studying overseas and also the risk of losing a current job, especially for those mature-aged students who had work and family commitments. *“The program talks about exchange too much. For people with jobs here, it would result in loss of employment, and is very expensive” (Survey participant 3).*

Participants also expressed the need for conversation partners. *“It would be good to have a Chinese buddy or a partner (for Chinese language learning) that you meet up with for fifteen minutes and speak to them, using the language, on a weekly basis – even over the phone or over Internet” (Student 1).*

Another suggestion to emerge that was strongly supported by the chorus of participants’ voices was the maximisation of technology-enhanced language learning. One staff participant argued that: *“just integrating more authentic text, or real-time experience using the internet more, giving them more change to see living language, and helping them to skim across all the stuff that they don’t understand, and pick up something that they can take away and put into practice in their language use” (Staff 4).*

Modern technologies have brought some exciting changes to the environment of language education in the last few decades. For instance, authentic materials such as blogs, podcasts, and videos are now at teachers’ and students’ fingertips. While creative and innovative uses of these technologies may enhance students’ language learning experiences immensely, whether or not heavily relying on them would develop well-rounded intercultural communication competence still remains a concern. However, in order to learn to communicate, students need to practice communication with other human beings. Therefore, more attention should be paid to the use of technology in the classroom, and students should be given more opportunities to practice using it. At tertiary level, language educators must ensure that students who have some experience in other languages and

cultures can further extend their skills and cultural breadth. Learning a language is about valuing and respecting other cultures and, perhaps more importantly, about motivating and cultivating in students a lifelong commitment to language learning.

Finally, the overall results of this part indicated that both the staff and student participants perceived that their foreign language teaching and learning could be improved by organising multicultural events. The following statements provide evidence of this viewpoint:

*For the school generally, I'd like to see a little bit of interdisciplinary contact and activities. So that would build collegial relations, and also help to raise the intercultural awareness of the staff in the school. (Staff 4)*

*I was also thinking of perhaps within the school community, certain celebrations that then might encourage other students to want to go and have a look – through music, food and interaction. (Student 3)*

Moreover, one staff participant and one student participant each proposed the inclusion of a cross-cultural unit for language students at the university:

*I think that is possible, and it could be a cross-cultural unit where students of any modern languages or, for that matter, people who are not even studying languages can come, and ... there could be a unit on intercultural understanding. (Staff 6)*

*Because of the tendency when you teach cultural aspects, for them to become a list of traits, because culture is active – it's embedded in the way we interact and everything, and if you teach that it's a list of traits, there are certain aspects that are really interesting. So the trick is to develop a way to explore and investigate your own culture – maybe it should be one compulsory subject in any degree in Asian studies, or a degree in whatever, to have one subject. (Student 9)*

#### **5.3.5.4 Sub-theme 4: Staff and students' expectations**

Finally, in this section of the analysis, staff and students' expectations were revealed.

One student participant said: *“I think we should have more interchange programs”* (Student 13).

In addition, two staff participants also expressed their expectations:

*If the students have a good motivation, they learn – as well as the basic, solid idea they have, they can easily expand, if there is a need, for the student. (Staff 7)*

*Hopefully draw the students into the conversation as well, because the ideas that we draw out in the students own minds are more lasting than when we try to feed our own ideas into their minds. (Staff 4)*

What was striking about these comments was the intensity of emotion associated with the personal choices to teach/learn a foreign language. The ultimate goal of any study on learners’ strategies is to identify and promote effective strategies to optimise learners’ proficiency. These findings on the strategies that cultural elements can be integrated into language teaching provide indispensable information for foreign language educators in designing courses that could better facilitate the development of intercultural communication skills.

#### **5.4 Conclusion**

This chapter has provided an overview of this study’s qualitative data analysis. With a thematic data analysis method, a total of 5 major themes and 13 sub-themes inductively emerged from the data. This thematic hierarchical structure provided a descriptive account of teaching staff and students’ overall perceptions and intercultural experiences in relation to their foreign language teaching and learning, both personally and professionally. Generally, the research results indicated that in this case study, both teaching staff and students highly valued the role of intercultural awareness in foreign language teaching and learning in tertiary education. Additionally, in the final section of this chapter, suggestions and expectations of teaching staff and students with regard to strategies to enhance cultural sensitivity were also provided.

The analysis of this study's qualitative data analysis provides a complementary and indispensable addition to the quantitative data analysis provided in Chapter 4. A more profound discussion of the findings of both quantitative and qualitative data analysis in the context of the extant literature is presented in the next chapter, Chapter 6.

## **6. Chapter 6 – Discussion**

### **6.1 Introduction**

In light of the quantitative and qualitative findings of the study, this chapter focuses on examining extent to which the research objectives have been addressed and achieved. Both the quantitative and qualitative results will be discussed with reference to the review of literature presented earlier in the thesis.

In order to gain an understanding of the importance of intercultural awareness in foreign language teaching and learning in the context of tertiary study, this research study sought multiple perspectives: teaching staff and students involved in both Asian and European languages teaching and learning at the university. The results of the study are intended to inform teaching staff as well as students of current perspectives, and more broadly to the university, concerning the development of intercultural awareness, the effectiveness of intercultural communication and the need for improving internationalised education in the university.

As stated at the beginning of this report on the research journey, this study sought to investigate the perceptions of teaching staff and students towards the significance of intercultural awareness in foreign language teaching and learning at tertiary level in Australia. To fulfil the research objectives of this study, quantitative and qualitative methods were combined in a mixed methods approach in order to examine the attitudes and experiences of UTAS teachers and students in relation to intercultural awareness in foreign language teaching and learning in this Australian university context. The findings concerning each of the objectives are discussed in the following sections.

### **6.2 General discussion**

This study aimed to gain a better understanding of the significant role of intercultural awareness in foreign language teaching and learning. As previously mentioned, the data for this research was generated from two sources: teachers and students teaching and studying foreign languages at UTAS. The combination

of quantitative and qualitative methodologies in this study produced a picture of the beliefs of teaching staff and students, and their perceptions of practices and experiences related to their language teaching and learning. The findings were not surprising, given the numerous factors associated with participant variables that account for the similarities in participants' perceptions of intercultural awareness in a foreign language. However, it is interesting to note the apparent uniformity of beliefs and practices between teaching staff and students across all foreign language programs.

Intercultural awareness, as a key element in foreign language teaching and learning, was highly valued from various perspectives by the participants within this study. That is to say, its significant role, particularly in the field of language and culture, was recognised by the teaching staff and the students from this university. Their understanding of intercultural awareness has certainly enhanced participants' language teaching and learning. Most significantly, for many student participants, responses to the survey items correlated with responses to the interviews regarding the primary incentive for taking foreign language courses: to know about other cultures and to interact with people from other parts of the world. This is consistent with the findings reported in several studies (Roberts, 1992; Robinson, 1978).

In addition, there are indications that the increasing number of students from culturally diverse backgrounds reinforces the need to deliver vibrant foreign language programs at Australian universities. Teachers in language education programs must be prepared to meet the demands of the rapidly growing, ethnically and linguistically diverse population in language classroom. Together, these findings seem to suggest that universities need to recognise students' diverse expectations, to respect their different cultural backgrounds, and to provide an open and safe learning environment.

Moreover, findings from this research also suggested that the participants showed general satisfaction with the emphasis placed on intercultural awareness development in the language programs at this university. This optimistic attitude was clearly evident within both the quantitative and qualitative data. For example, based on what has been discussed in the quantitative data analysis chapter, the

cultural aspect of language learning is adequately dealt with in the current programs. In particular, one student respondent mentioned this matter in her interview by saying, “*come and learn languages at UTAS, you will get the sparks*” (Student 7).

### **6.3 Research objectives**

To discuss whether the research objectives have been achieved, it is important to re-visit them and the questions set out for this study. The study investigated teaching staff and students’ opinions on the significance of intercultural awareness in foreign language teaching and learning. As outlined in earlier chapters, the overarching research question for this study is:

*What are the perceptions of academic staff members as well students towards the significance of intercultural awareness in foreign language teaching and learning in an Australian university context?*

From this question several underlying research questions were developed. These are:

- What does intercultural awareness mean to teaching staff and students in general?
- How do teaching staff and students interpret intercultural awareness in tertiary-level language education?
- What are the intercultural experiences of teaching staff and students?
- To what extent does intercultural awareness affect the teachers’ language teaching and students’ language learning?
- What are the most effective ways to develop intercultural communication skills?

#### **6.3.1 Research objective 1: Views towards the concept of intercultural awareness**

The first research objective of this study was to investigate the views of teaching staff and students of the significance of intercultural awareness, in general. This

objective was addressed by both the quantitative and qualitative research. The following two questions were asked in relation to this research objective:

- How do teaching staff and students describe intercultural awareness as a concept?
- How do teaching staff and students perceive intercultural awareness?

First of all, findings from the participants' responses to the questionnaire survey and interviews were consistent with the situation discussed in the literature regarding views on Australia's multiculturalism. Participants considered Australia as a nation of cultural diversity. However, there was one survey participant who made the critical observation that "*Australia is a multicultural country although some people do not embrace intercultural awareness, around Tasmania especially as there tends to be a 'fear' towards other cultures and languages*" (Survey student participant 07).

The data showed that there was a clear agreement on the acknowledgement of the significance of intercultural awareness among the teaching staff and students (89.5%). These perceptions are in agreement with Han's (2013) claim that in an era of coexistence of multi-culture, understanding and accepting cultural differences are essential in order to achieve communication goals. All the participants recognised that there were numerous benefits brought about by intercultural awareness, including enriching one's life (93.9%), widening one's worldview (96.6%), and enhancing the understanding of one's own cultures (89.4%).

Furthermore, 52.2% participants acknowledged that intercultural awareness was hard to develop. According to Han (2013), intercultural awareness cannot grow naturally, it has to be learned and acquired. Based on the survey data, the participants were strongly in favour of sources which can enhance intercultural awareness, such as travelling (92.4%), interacting with immigrants (86.3%) and international students (94.9%). As international students became a major source of international education, globally, the need for intercultural knowledge and skills that lead to intercultural communicative competence becomes critical. Australia is one of the world's most prominent international education destinations. According

to Australian Education International (AEI) (Walters, 2012), in 2009, Australia recorded 630,663 international student enrolments – an effective doubling of numbers recorded in 2004. As a result, in the spirit of globalisation, international cultural exchanges are multiplying. It is imperative that people learn and master foreign languages, especially university students. Learning languages assists students in gaining a global perspective and broadens their future horizons.

### **6.3.2 Research objective 2: Perceptions towards the significance of intercultural awareness in foreign language teaching and learning**

The second research objective is to investigate teachers' and students' perceptions of the significance of intercultural awareness in foreign language teaching and learning in the Tasmanian tertiary educational context. This research objective was addressed by both research phases. Two questions were asked regarding this research objective:

- What is the role of intercultural awareness in foreign language teaching and learning?
- What beliefs about cultural integration into language education do staff and students hold?

#### ***6.3.2.1 Importance of intercultural awareness***

The findings indicate the significance of intercultural awareness in the context of language learning (94.9%); it is definitely a vital part of foreign language teaching and learning. Language is culture-bound. There is no doubt that helping students to understand the specifics of the relationship between language and culture is one of the key elements of intercultural competence. According to Han (2013), most significant when examining culture in foreign language teaching and learning are the types of knowledge, skills, and attitudes envisaged in intercultural awareness. These relate to understanding culture, language, and communication in general, as well as in relation to particular contexts, and an awareness of the dynamic relationship between foreign language and its diverse sociocultural settings.

Most participants (93.8%) in this study, aware of the inevitability of teaching culture in a language course, believed that cultural background knowledge is an

imperative in teaching and learning language. For instance, one survey respondent pointed out that language and culture are mutually embedded. She went on to state her own belief that culture was naturally embedded within language and therefore needs to be integrated with teaching the language. Quite a few student participants (81.9%) expressed a similar perspective. In their view, language learners need to become familiar with choice of language and the words that people deliberately select and choose to use for different purposes. This finding is supported by Aguilar (2009), who believes that “language and its corresponding cultures are compared and contrasted and actively interrelate and interact, mutually and positively influencing one another” (p. 246).

Most participants strongly favoured the inclusion of a cultural component to a language course, based on the following reasons: it provides a meaningful context for language learning (93.8%); it enhances students’ motivation towards the target language (88%); and it enhances students’ curiosity about the target culture (92.1%). They did not think the inclusion of a cultural component impeded language acquisition (73.6%). On the contrary, the respondents indicated that cultural components provided them with better insights into the context of the target language. Knowing what is appropriate to say to whom, and in what situations, means understanding the beliefs and values represented by the various forms and usages of the language (Peterson & Coltrane, 2003).

The evidence from the data supports the results of several studies which have shown a strong positive relationship between language acquisition and attitude towards the target culture (Mantle-Bromely, 1995). Therefore, it can be concluded that eventually, cultural awareness may foster a positive attitude toward the target culture, which in turn facilitates the acquisition of the language.

Moreover, the majority of the participants (84.6%) emphasised that merely learning the words without developing an understanding of the differences in the cultural context in which the words are deployed will not enable the learner to communicate effectively with speakers of the target language, because multiple areas of potential cross-cultural misunderstanding still remain if only the words and grammar are learned. As Thomas (1983) points out, inappropriateness in interactions between native and non-native speakers often leads to socio-

pragmatic failure, breakdown in communication, and the stereotyping of the non-native speaker.

As mentioned in the review of the literature, this new era is full of new knowledge and innovative ideas, with the arrival of the knowledge economy society, characterised by knowledge as wealth and capital. As a result, today's language classroom is vastly different from that of the mid- to late twentieth century. The focus is no longer on grammar, memorisation and learning from rote, but rather using language and cultural knowledge as a means to connect to others around the globe. Geographical and physical boundaries are being transcended by technology, as students learn to reach out to the world around them, using their language and cultural skills to facilitate the connections they are eager to make (Eaton, 2010).

Through the study of intercultural awareness, people can gain insight into different cultures, broaden their horizons and open their minds to different perspectives and experiences. Because of the great cultural diversity, communication in today's world has become intercultural in both essence and character. With the tendency towards globalisation of the economy, intercultural communication competence is becoming more and more significant. Intercultural communication competence means being able to communicate efficiently and effectively with people from other cultures, in order to achieve mutual understanding and gain better cooperation.

In addition, it is widely agreed that having international students at the university is beneficial to the local community and classroom teaching (94.9%). This finding is also supported by a study conducted by Zhou, Topping and Jindal-Snape (2011), who argue that staff gained new professional insights into intercultural teaching and learning when working with international students.

### ***6.3.2.2 Language and culture***

Culture conditions and shapes learning in general and language learning in particular (Gonzalez, Chen, & Sanchez, 2001). Language and culture are inextricably linked and interdependent, and understanding target language culture improves understanding of the language (Yang & Chen, 2006). Brody (2003) also argues that culture is represented in part through language while language is

manifested through culture. In terms of this study, most of the participants (94.9%) agreed that teaching about culture should be a part of a language course. That is to say, learning a language involves learning its culture.

Furthermore, Crozet and Liddicoat (2000) acknowledge that culture affects an individual's thoughts, actions, and words and further assert that cultural understanding is fundamental in language learning and teaching. For example, as parts of its standards for foreign language learning, the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTEL) (National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project (NSFLEP), 1996) advocated applying the “five Cs” of language education: communication, cultures, connections, comparisons, and communities. “Cultures” in the “five Cs” refers to the intimate relationship between language and culture, that is through the study of other languages, students gain a knowledge and understanding of the cultures that use that language and, in fact, cannot truly master the language until they have also mastered the cultural contexts in which the language occurs. In other words, it is essential to include teaching materials related to the culture of the target language, as learners should understand the relationship between the applications and perspectives as well as the products of the culture studied.

According to Byrnes (2010, p. 315), “new language and new culture come as a package: as is to be expected, the two go hand in hand.” Scarino (2009) also stresses the importance of meta-awareness, the skill to be able to see links between culture, language and learning. He believes intercultural language learning is “about how language and culture come into play in creating and exchanging meaning” (Scarino, 2009, p. 69). Research and study in the field of language and culture is playing an important part in language education. As constantly stressed throughout this thesis, in order to face the challenges of the twenty-first century and to effectively participate in today's globalised, knowledge-based economy, societies increasingly need individuals who can communicate globally and who are aware of the role of language and culture (Haley, Steeley, & Salahshoor, 2013).

### ***6.3.2.3 Cultural integration in language teaching and learning***

An important reason to integrate culture into language teaching is to increase students' motivation and positive attitudes toward language learning. Both motivation and attitudes are considered to be major factors influencing achievement. Based on the results of the data analysis, 88% participants seemed to recognise the vital role culture plays in terms of motivation to learn languages. Integrating cultural elements of the target language classes is argued to have a great significance in creating interest and motivation to learn foreign languages (Hedon, 1980; Prodromou, 1988; Valdes, 1990). A survey was conducted in Taiwan to determine the possibility of using the study of culture as a means to increase motivation in the foreign language classroom. The findings suggested that the study of culture was a possible incentive and there were strong correlations between attitudes and motivation towards learning (Ho, 1998).

The results of this study echoed a need to emphasise and reinforce motivated language learning. This is consistent with the findings reported in Tasker's (2010) study of motivation to learn Chinese language, with one incentive being the aesthetic and cultural world that the Chinese language represents. The study of culture increases learners' curiosity about and interest in target countries and also their motivation (Genc & Bada, 2005). For this reason alone, education in the target culture is inseparable from imparting linguistic competencies.

Another reason for integration of culture into language teaching is that teaching culture in language improves pedagogy and also identifies the elements of the target culture with which students are engaging. It is vital to understand how language integrates cultural and social knowledge of target culture in the classroom. New culture can be grasped and understood by exposing the learner to a cultural context where culture is integrated into language learning. The key factor that unites both language learning, and the task of learning about other cultures, is the communication task. As has been said, the learner must learn not only the meaning of words in the target language, but also what implications lie behind them. This is only possible where an awareness of cultural differences exists.

While intercultural awareness has been widely acknowledged as a significant part of language teaching and learning, it is also considered that its development depended greatly on how it was treated. As Paige, Jorstad, Siaya, Klein, and Colby (2003) indicate, culture and language is learned from a dynamic interaction among context, prior experience, and individuals. In addition, research also suggests that to help students establish a strong association between language and culture, teachers need to take the role of an educator; effective learning relies on teachers' attitudes, goals, and priorities about culture in language education (Robinson, 1981).

In relation to this study, in all foreign language programs at this university, qualified language teachers, who were native speakers of target languages, actively engaged in teaching practices and they also had extensive intercultural experiences themselves, both professionally and personally. 86% participants agreed that native speaking teachers should be included in a language program. The native speaker has a linguistic competency in the target language as well as firsthand cultural knowledge to share (Haley, et al., 2013). This result is in opposition to the theory that many teachers are not able to develop cultural competence as they have little or no experience with different cultures (Bennett, Bennett, & Allen, 2003).

In summary, harnessing intrinsic interest and curiosity and exploring ways to integrate cultural elements into teaching will greatly enhance the depth of language learning, and provide more direct and more authentic cultural understanding. Cultural understandings are the underpinnings of communication and language learning, and therefore cultural learning is a crucial element in the language classroom (Damen, 2003). However, the changing patterns of culture resulting from changing demographics and a highly interconnected world have posed new challenges in relation to recent language education development (Ho, 2006). The pedagogical implications arising from the findings of this study will be discussed based in the recommendations section of this chapter.

### **6.3.3 Research objective 3: Intercultural experiences relating to language teaching and learning**

The third research objective was to examine the intercultural experience of university teaching staff and students. This research objective was addressed by both the quantitative and qualitative phases. The following two questions were asked relating to this objective:

- What are teaching staff and students' intercultural experiences personally and professionally?
- What is the influence of staff and students' intercultural experiences on foreign language teaching and learning?

#### **6.3.3.1 Intercultural experiences**

Intercultural experience is no longer the privilege of diplomats, tradesmen or overseas sojourners. With the blessing of technology, people can visit any place or contact friends in almost every corner of the world. Thanks to the “magic” of social networks, people can talk face-to-face to someone far away. As a result, being intercultural is reality and becoming intercultural is a necessity for any nation and people to survive and thrive in today's multicultural world.

As an example, the latest Australia in the Asian Century White Paper was released in October 2012. The paper calls for students to be given the opportunity to study one of four languages throughout their entire school career: Chinese (Mandarin), Hindi, Indonesian, or Japanese. AsiaBound Program was part of the Gillard Government's implementation of initiatives flowing from the White Paper. The program aims to increase the overall number of Australian students with a first-hand study experience of Asia; to encourage more students to become Asia-literate; and to support increased Asian language competency of Australian students, together with mobility experiences (Department of Industry Innovation Science Research and Tertiary Education (DIISRTE), 2013). The university's Asian language students are encouraged to take advantage of this scheme in order to experience Asian languages and cultures in target countries.

However, ignorance of and indifference to cultural diversity will lead to misunderstandings and breakdowns in communication. As argued by Lightbown and Spada (2006), the cultural differences in intercultural interactions sometimes lead to communication breakdown or misunderstanding, even when the words and the sentence structures are correct. Furthermore, intercultural competence is complex and multifaceted, where certain skills must result from exposure, first-hand experience and reflection (Stier, 2004). Students can be encouraged to use their real-world experiences as a lens for discovering certain beliefs and attitudes about their experiences, to make connections with their learning and increase its depth.

The experience of travelling across cultural and social boundaries presents individuals with opportunities to broaden and develop their intercultural awareness and intra-/interpersonal competence (Cortazzi & Jin, 1997). In addition, intercultural experience is “essential for an enhancement of our self-awareness as cultural beings; it helps us understand how we are shaped by our culture” (Bredella, 2003, p. 227). It is therefore crucial for language learners to be aware of these cultural differences and build positive attitudes towards other cultures. In relation to this study, the survey data showed that the participants generally liked to travel to other countries (94.8%), to eat food from other countries (95.3%), and to interact with people from different cultural backgrounds (92.2%). Moreover, they also emphasised that learning languages at the university inspired them to appreciate cultural diversity (83.6%). This was consistent with the finding from the study’s qualitative data.

Interestingly, based on the responses of the interview participants, intercultural experiences were categorised by them in broad terms as either positive or negative, however the majority of negatively categorised intercultural experiences could more accurately, perhaps, be described as “challenging.” The key factors in determining whether an intercultural experience is positive or negative in nature are firstly the degree to which a challenge is present in the situation, and secondly the way in which the challenge is handled.

In addition, it emerged from the data that the frequency of positive experiences was greater than participants had anticipated. The balance between positive

experiences (enjoyments) and negative experiences (challenges) in their lives may have contributed to participants' perceptions of intercultural awareness in general. Several participants mentioned that positive intercultural experiences, such as the sense of joy that attaches to the development of skills in communication and successful attempts to communicate in the target language, may bring about profound changes or insights in the process of language learning. This is also congruent with a study on the experiences of intermediate distance learners of Chinese conducted by Tasker (2010). She expresses similar perspective.

It is worth noting that the stories in the interview opened up lots of windows, however, due to the fact that the nature of many of the stories was sensitive and the interviewees were likely to be identifiable, these stories were excluded from the results.

### ***6.3.3.2 Influential factors in intercultural experiences***

Many studies reveal that the process of cross-cultural experiences may lead to increased intercultural perception and enhance learners' cultural awareness and appreciation (Salyer, 1993). For example, learners can develop their cultural awareness for culture learning through personal experiences (Ho, 2009). Cultural awareness and cultural experiences are best acquired when students immerse themselves in the country of the target culture (Istanto, 2009). Undoubtedly, a total immersion in the culture of a native speaking country seems to be the first preference for learning its culture.

Nonetheless, it is interesting to see that for 77.3% participants involved in this study, intercultural experiences have provided them with an excellent opportunity for personal growth. Furthermore, they enjoyed the achievement of personal independence, broadened life experiences and interests and improved interpersonal and communication skills (Cortazzi & Jin, 1997). In particular, several interviewees also mentioned that their intercultural experiences have a great impact on their foreign language teaching and learning. For example, one student interviewee asserted that, *“Those experiences, sense of relationships and friendships have been broadened by going to the country itself. So it's that general broadening of the understanding as my experiences have been broadened*

*at the same time.” (Student 3) Moreover, another student interviewee stressed the importance of making an effort to continue involvement after returning home. He pointed out that, “it never stops and you never learn entirely about another culture – you never learn the language fully, but you keep looking for those experiences that are going to develop and maintain your interest in the other cultures.” (Student 2)*

In addition, in classroom teaching, teachers and students with experiences of other cultures can bring their experiences of intercultural communication to the class for discussion and reflection, for example by considering what was successful or not, or how they felt about their experiences. Such activities can provide valuable opportunities to explore foreign culture as well as to investigate their own cultures as both language teachers and students are bearers or messengers of a different culture and language.

#### **6.3.4 Research objective 4: Compared perspectives between teaching staff and students**

The fourth research objective was to compare beliefs and perceptions of teaching staff and students on intercultural awareness in foreign language teaching and learning. Enquiries were made in both quantitative and qualitative phases of the research to achieve this objective, and two questions supported these enquiries:

- What are the identified similarities in beliefs and perceptions held by teaching staff and students?
- What are the identified differences in beliefs and perceptions held by teaching staff and students?

In general, gaps were discovered between the teaching staff and students’ views on intercultural awareness, although both groups had given a positive evaluation of intercultural awareness, overall. A very interesting result that deserved further attention was that there was very little agreement between the staff views and the student views on the effectiveness of using technological resources.

When asking about the usefulness of technologies in supporting their language learning, students indicated a strong preference for it. However, teaching staff

participants were unsure as to whether technology would be useful. Teacher interviewees identified a number of perceived reasons for staff scepticism associated with using technologies to support their teaching, including a lack of time, increased workload, level of confidence of using technology, a lack of expectation that they should, loss of face-to-face interaction, and the lack of opportunities to support the training. For example, one teacher expressed her concern over online delivery. She thought *“it could be worse because then students don’t have to do anything anymore – just tick boxes.”* (Staff 3) This result supported a recent report that most academics are not using new and compelling technologies for learning and teaching, nor for organising their own research (The New Media Consortium & Griffith University, 2012).

One finding of the research, which is of particular interest, was the respondents’ belief that a language other than English should be taught as a compulsory unit at this university. However, the results suggested that discrepancies exist between teacher and student views about this suggestion. Based on the findings, the teacher participants were in favour of this proposal, while in contrast, the student respondents held some reservations. Several student respondents commented on this, with one saying: *“Compulsory language units in any faculty would be problematic.”* Another respondent believed that *“Studying another language is beneficial for everyone to experience, whether it should be compulsory would be an interesting debate.”* The reasons behind these views were expressed in the following response to the survey, *“I do not believe that any language should be compulsory with any course. Why makes [sic] someone do a subject they don’t love”?* One other respondent argued that *“I don’t think it would work if language was compulsory to a course because you need to be interested to commit to it.”* Additionally, another respondent said, *“I do not believe that any language should be compulsory in course design as it would not be enjoyable or useful for everyone.”* Interestingly, one other respondent echoed by saying, *“I love learning languages but not all people do, it shouldn’t always be compulsory, but for teachers and nurses, definitely important.”* It seemed that the respondent could see that for some careers it would be useful to have a second language, presumably because teachers and nurses engage with members of the public, and increasingly the public is becoming more multicultural.

As can be seen from what has been discussed above, there were small differences between perceived expectations of intercultural awareness by staff and students. However, it is clear from this study that an investigation into intercultural awareness may contribute to a better language learning environment. As mentioned earlier, Kramsch (1993) defines intercultural awareness as a third place. Although the personal and interpersonal shift required to move into the third place cannot be taught, aspects of culture can be taught explicitly (Crozet & Liddicoat, 2000) and the classroom is a place where learners have the opportunity to gain knowledge, develop skills and reflect on learning (Byram, 1997). As mentioned in the literature, the communicative approach has been the mainstream approach in classroom foreign language teaching. Some advocates of this approach have even eliminated the teaching of grammar altogether in favour of communication in the classroom.

In addition, as discussed extensively in the literature chapter, culture as a concept is dynamic and interactive; it is the verbal and non-verbal language, values, and cognitive style (Bennett, et al., 2003). The results of this study clearly indicated that learning language and learning about other cultures are not two separate tasks; they are actually two aspects of what is fundamentally the same task. The deciding factor is whether the learner forms and maintains a positive attitude to learning, and to the target language and culture.

### **6.3.5 Research objective 5: Recommendations for enhancing intercultural communication competence**

The last research objective of this study was to provide recommendations for enhancing intercultural awareness in foreign language teaching and learning in the Tasmanian tertiary educational context. This research objective was addressed by the qualitative data analysis phase within which the following four questions were asked:

- What are the characteristics and features of current language programs?
- What are the challenges and obstacles of current teaching approaches?
- In what ways can intercultural awareness be enhanced in language teaching and learning?

- How is a language program structured to maximise student learning?
- What are the expectations of teaching staff and students in relation to intercultural awareness in their language teaching and learning?

### ***6.3.5.1 Challenges and obstacles***

In this study, participants described how and what cultural teaching was carried out in their language classes. A number of challenges and obstacles were also revealed, while the participants gave an overall positive evaluation of the courses. The participants in this study believed the suitability of the teaching context was an important aspect of language teaching and learning.

The challenges and obstacles identified by participants related to four factors: lack of time allocated; insufficient appropriate teaching materials; the role of teachers; and effective and efficient teaching techniques. A number of teaching staff suffered from the limitations on the time they had to devote to their language teaching, and on the limited teaching resources currently available. For example, one staff member interviewee mentioned that textbooks were out of date, or there are all sorts of problems. From the data it seemed that very few staff interviewees were able to freely integrate cultural knowledge in their language classroom. There may be a possibility of language teachers fully embracing intercultural language teaching and engaging their students in intercultural competence, however, at this time it remains an issue as to how teachers balance cultural components and language components in their language classes.

Even beyond considerations of time and resourcing, however, the explicit discussion of intercultural awareness is not the usual mode of delivery of a language course. As constantly emphasised, this is because the primary determining factors in the matter of whether or not the learner develops a positive attitude towards the target language and culture are internal to the learner. From a student's perspective, acquiring a new language means a lot more than the manipulation of syntax and lexicon (Genc & Bada, 2005). As a result, one dilemma that emerged as a research finding was that teaching culture is considered important by most teachers but it has remained insubstantial and sporadic in most language classrooms (Omaggio-Hadley, 1993). Although

teaching culture has been an integral part of language teaching classrooms, the ways in which it is taught continues to evolve. A paradigm shift from a traditional to intercultural stance in language education poses a challenge that both language teachers and students have to negotiate in order to meet the goals of foreign language education in this modern world.

In addition, some significant limitations were exposed in relation to the integration of cultural aspects into language teaching classes. It was agreed by 84.6% participants that culture should be embedded in language teaching and learning. This supports the theory that language and culture cannot be separated, and learning a language entails learning its culture (Istanto, 2009). However, in reality, many teachers sometimes hesitate to incorporate cultural studies in their language syllabus because they are afraid of wasting time which can be allocated for teaching grammar or other language skills (Istanto, 2009). As argued by Brooks (1968, p. 206), “will special emphasis upon culture not be wasteful of precious class time and end up giving the student less rather than more of what he is entitled to expect from his language course?” Byram and Morgan (1994) also note that in most language courses the greatest amount of time and energy is still devoted to the grammar and vocabulary aspects of language. Culture remains the weakest component due to its uneven treatment in textbooks and the lack of familiarity among teachers with the culture, and with the techniques needed to teach it (Istanto, 2009). These views were shared by most staff interviewees. Most teacher participants were well aware of the importance of teaching culture in a language class, however they believed that the problem of in-class time constrains prevented them from allocating time for teaching other aspects of language in class.

As discussed extensively in the Literature Review, Liddicoat’s (2002) dynamic view of culture contrasts with a static view, which is a body with its flexible systems reflecting and being affected by other cultures. On the whole, the dynamic nature of culture prevents it from being easily explainable or teachable (McConachy, 2008). For example, the growth of the global economy and promotion of multiculturalism have generated unprecedented opportunities for students to learn and understand Chinese culture, regardless of where and who

they are (Zhiqun Xing, 2006). However, culture is a very complex and multifaceted subject for scholars, educators and students alike to study, teach, and learn (Zhiqun Xing, 2006).

The study found that an effective approach is badly needed where language and culture study are more closely integrated and harmonised than is the current situation at this university. Language teaching and learning that emphasises the interdependence of language and culture and the importance of intercultural understanding as a key goal of language education, and is crucial within higher education settings.

Additionally, another finding that deserves attention is 86.5% student participants' expressed desire to take further classes about target cultures. This finding was significant because it indicated that culture integration into language courses was currently not only a demand of teachers, but also of students. Thus, the effect of integrating a cultural component with the language course extends beyond the language classroom. Meanwhile, the classroom also serves as a kind of microcosm of the real world, where languages and cultures are put into contact with one another (Aguilar, 2009). Van Lier (1988) also claims that there is no difference between a classroom and a naturalistic setting for introductory level language learning, since the linguistic proficiency of students at that level is not sufficient for establishing any complicated communication.

Moreover, another area explored in interviews was teachers' awareness of the need to make links between language and culture. The data gathered indicated that Introductory Chinese language classes at UTAS (taught by the researcher's colleagues) were a good example of incorporating cultural content. At the university that provided the context for this study, the history, culture and society of China was introduced into introductory level Chinese language class several years ago. The student participants who were undertaking Chinese language learning mentioned that this component definitely promoted their curiosity about Chinese history, culture and society, and also raised Australian-born students' awareness of their own Australian culture. Quite a few student participants mentioned in their interviews that this element not only enhanced their Chinese cultural understanding and appreciation but also enriched their knowledge and life

experience through study in Chinese. It can be seen that a solid approach to culture should integrate a range of different understandings of culture as a core component of language education (Liddicoat, et al., 2003).

Furthermore, the research findings also showed that teaching staff participants' intercultural sensitivity plays an important role in international students' classroom participation. It is the role of language teachers to help students stay open-minded and accept the diversity of the world that is created by different people with different behaviours and values. In this respect, it has connections with the work of Corbett (2003), who states that the teaching of a foreign language is more than the transfer of information and that the transmission of attitudes and values are implicit in the language being taught. Both teachers and materials designers should build into cultural activities opportunities for reflection and the development of critical cultural awareness, that is, the promotion of open-mindedness, curiosity, tolerance of difference and respect (Corbett, 2003).

Some pedagogical recommendations will be proposed in the next section, based on the above discussions and the findings of this research. The ultimate goal of language education is to identify and promote effective teaching and learning strategies to optimise learners' language, as well as their cultural proficiency.

#### **6.3.5.2 Recommendations**

Participating staff and students made several recommendations for the future development of intercultural awareness in foreign language teaching and learning. These recommendations were based on the participants' knowledge and understanding of the language programs at the university. This section will probe into possible approaches to the cultivation of intercultural awareness from various perspectives: those participants and those considered best practice in the literature.

Although teaching culture as an integral part of language has gained importance in the twenty-first century as a result of internationalisation and globalisation of communication (Lange & Paige, 2003), issues and challenges regarding how to implement the introduction of cultural elements into language teaching and assessment still exist.

#### 6.3.5.2.1 Recommendation 1: Inclusion of a cultural unit in language courses

Language always occurs within a cultural and social setting, and it must be interpreted in the light of this social and cultural environment. Essentially within the intercultural notions lies a belief that language itself is a cultural act (Kramsch, 1993). Language learning is a process of developing awareness of the world, and learning cultural knowledge is an important way to enrich learners' knowledge. However, foreign language learning is also a complex phenomenon with different variables concerning social and cultural elements of various contexts.

This issue was explored from the data about the benefit of teaching culture, as Stainer (1971) argues that studying culture gives students a reason to study the target language as well as rendering the study of language meaningful. For example, there has been a focus on intercultural language learning in New Zealand schools since the New Zealand Curriculum released in 2007 (Ministry of Education, 2007). The new learning languages area is communicative competence, which is supported by two key areas: interacting and making meaning, and knowledge awareness. Knowledge awareness comprises two equally weighted strands: language knowledge and cultural knowledge. The strategies suggested in response to this were mentioned in one of the New Zealand Ministry of Education's International Languages Series courses (Ministry of Education, 2003), which suggested that students' learning can be enhanced by the frequent inclusion of relevant and interesting cultural activities.

In addition, as previously mentioned, the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages has expounded on the importance of combining the teaching of culture into the language curriculum to enhance understanding and acceptance of differences between people, cultures and ideologies (National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project (NSFLEP), 1996). This is especially the case, as some students of foreign languages struggle with learning a language and culture with which they are unfamiliar. Cultural learning is informative, as well as interesting, which enables students to experience pleasure from language learning. As a result, students' interests in learning and their motivation and desire to communicate in the foreign language will be aroused.

In summary, culture classes have a humanising and a motivating effect on the language learner and the learning process (Genc & Bada, 2005). The findings of this study have implications for the inclusion of a culture class in the curriculum of language programs at the university. Incorporated in the curriculum, a cultural component would prove to be a vital element of language teaching and learning as it offers a number of possibilities in relation to the development of intercultural communicative competence, as well as other skills in the instruction of any language. Exposure to “strange” cultures with its features, social expectations and language-requirement is considered a unique multi-level learning experience through which intercultural competence, knowledge of and respect for other cultures may be developed (Stier, 2003).

#### 6.3.5.2.2 Recommendation 2: Facilitating the role of teachers

Language teachers must be prepared to achieve three fundamental goals in the classroom:

- to motivate students and cultivate in them a lifelong commitment to language learning;
- to teach students the skills necessary to become effective language learners and to be able to recognise patterns in language and culture; and
- to teach students to understand deeply the target culture in all its diversity, including both traditional and contemporary elements (Asia Society, 2013a).

As mentioned throughout this thesis, with internationalisation has come the educational understanding that intercultural communication is prevalent and universal, regardless of race, ethnic group, nationality, and cultural background. Functioning as the cultural bridge, a university language teacher has the inescapable duty to help students to nurture intercultural understanding through language learning. Given that students bring different perspectives to language learning, teachers need to be exemplars of effective and creative pedagogy.

The implications of language being completely rooted in culture, are far reaching in regards to language teaching. A number of researchers have suggested that it is necessary for language teachers to take an active approach to raising learners’

awareness of the cultural nature of particular aspects of interaction (Kramsch, 1993; Rose, 2003). In order to provide more professional knowledge and skills for teaching in today's multicultural context, teachers must be able to meet the needs of students from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds (Tiedt & Tiedt, 2005).

Teachers should instruct their students on the cultural background of language usage, choose culturally appropriate teaching styles, and explore culturally linguistic differences in order to promote understanding. For example, based on the data, both teacher and student participants were in favour of the translation method in language teaching and learning. In translation teaching, teachers need to lead students to uncover the cultural implication of the original sentences, instructing students on how to analyse and understand them from a cultural perspective. Another point teachers should bear in mind is that students are supposed to combine the cultural connotation in discourse and the information outside discourse.

From the discussion above, it can be concluded that to assist students reap the benefits they derive from a diversity of cultural engagements, teachers themselves have to be culturally well-informed. They need to not only possess cultural competence themselves, but know how to translate it into language teaching. Nurturing students' cultural awareness is the responsibility of a language teacher (Istanto, 2009). Therefore, teachers should try to find relevant cultural materials and create contexts for cultural integration in language classrooms. Ultimately, by using these resources, teachers can convey the cultural understanding necessary for successful communication and interaction in the target language. As a result, they may help their students to acquire communicative language proficiency, including an intercultural dimension. For example, two teacher participants, who were both experienced language teachers, were also highly proficient in the target languages. They had spent considerable periods of time in the target cultures. Within and outside the classroom, they made great attempts to provide opportunities for students to develop intercultural understanding. One said, "*We have to try to find ways to teach it, and facilitate students in learning the culture, such as doing role plays.*" (Staff 4) Therefore, in a culturally responsive classroom, teachers need to respond to their students by incorporating their

students' cultural needs. In addition, teachers need to expose learners to the target culture by encouraging learners to consider cultural differences and extend culture learning to natural settings, such as creating opportunities outside the classroom.

In summary, in any educational change, teachers are the crucial factor, as they are the implementers of new ideas. There is also a need for teachers to adapt to their new roles as they are no longer in control of the content of education. Instead, the role of the teacher is to model the learning process and to foster curiosity. The study suggested that what teachers must do is to realise the need to change their beliefs about teaching and learning, and the need to acquire new skills and techniques in teaching and in assessment according to the new concepts in teaching and learning and the needs of their students. In terms of language teaching, the teacher's knowledge, attitudes and beliefs of the importance of nurturing cultural understanding play an important role in deciding instructional and methodological choices (Istanto, 2009).

#### 6.3.5.2.3 Recommendation 3: Utilising appropriate teaching materials

McKay (2003) contends that culture influences language teaching in two ways: linguistic and pedagogical. Pedagogically speaking, culture influences the choice of the language materials. For example, some textbooks provide examples from the target culture. In language classes, the materials used to teach a foreign language convey cultural information and messages explicitly and implicitly (Ogeyik, 2011).

With regards to second and foreign language education, adequate and appropriate learning materials are critical elements for both language teachers and language learners (Richards, 2001). According to Ogeyik (2011), through authentic texts, mass media materials, course books and translated texts, cultural awareness can be raised; and through cultural awareness, linguistic and communicative competence in the target language can be developed. Culture-oriented materials need to be consistent with the expectations of learners, because any measure of communicative competence requires dealing with culture and because cultural instruction should be purposeful and meaningful (Seelye, 1974).

Materials used for cultural sensitivity could be blended with other materials meant for more cultural engagement. Film and literature have been extensively used to furnish students with background knowledge of target cultures. Watson (1990, p. 3) states that “the culture provided by all the mass media, but particularly by film and television.” Istanto (2009) also argues that a film is a means of expression, a language and an art. Similarly, literature cannot escape its cultural implication (Chen, 2004). In this respect, film and literature are among several means of access to foreign culture studies.

In relation to this study, both Asian languages and European languages at UTAS offer film and literature related units. For example, the German program offers units on the literature of German speaking countries, extending from the Middle Ages to the present, a unit in business German, as well as units on German film. The Indonesian program includes Indonesian Literature and its Social Context, and Political and Social Change in Contemporary Indonesia. The Japanese program offers units which explore traditional and modern Japanese society, literature, film, and traditions of performance (University of Tasmania, 2013b).

Furthermore, knowing about the cross-cultural differences in strategy use may encourage language teachers to learn about the cultural backgrounds of their students, so that they can better employ the most suitable methods and materials in their language classes (Ryan & Bernard, 2000). When studying languages in target countries is not feasible, the language classroom can provide a suitable place to become intercultural, as learners can not only reflect on their experiences but also learn from their peers, and classroom-based learning is cognitive and deductive in nature (Damen, 1987). The classroom as an artificial community may offer some benefits, since it provides a safe environment, within which students can make mistakes without any detrimental real-world consequences – as opposed to study abroad programs where students might feel the real consequences of their mistakes (Damen, 1987; Kramsch, 1993). As Ellis (1992) elaborates, the teacher is in control of classroom interaction, thus preventing students from experiencing improper ways in which to engage or disengage in communication.

In summary, additional consideration of student backgrounds may help teachers tailor their teaching materials to more appropriately cater to differing student

needs. In this regard, pedagogically, the results of this study suggested that significant curricular adjustments need to be made by integrating cultural aspects to authentic teaching and learning materials.

#### 6.3.5.2.4 Recommendation 4: Using diverse teaching techniques

Hurd (2000) identifies the need to “find out as much as we can about our learners to be in a position to target their needs and respond appropriately” (p. 78). As indicated earlier, learners can try to learn foreign culture through various channels, such as making new foreign friends, reading all kinds of foreign literary works, watching foreign films and television programs of foreign language, and listening to foreign language music. There are also other means, such as reading newspapers and magazines, and listening to radio programs. However, designing teaching styles for university students is complicated by the diversity of student backgrounds and prior learning experiences.

Nowadays, students at UTAS are plugging into the information super highway, accessing their lectures via high-speed video, accessing virtual libraries full of learning materials from around the globe, and submitting assignments online. Not only does the rapid growth of technology change the way people live, from the way business is conducted to the way people communicate with each other, but technological advancements are also affecting the way people teach and learn. In particular, the Internet plays such an important role that, undeniably, it has become an essential feature of the present-day world, shrinking geographical distance and increasing the pace of life. Moreover, the Internet accelerates the flow of information and spreads education to all corners of the globe, enabling quick and easy access to the latest information worldwide. It is widely recognised that the Internet represents a major technological achievement for mankind, bringing with it huge communication and social implications (Crystal, 2006).

Therefore, it is noteworthy that the findings of this study highlight the potential of modern instructional technologies for the field of language education. The comments elicited in this study demonstrated that the participants recognised the advantages of the integration of Internet tools in language teaching and learning activities. The Web as a research tool encourages higher order thinking skills in

language students (Singhal, 1997). This study found that students are enthusiastic about using technologies in their learning, and that such use can result in positive learning experience for them. However, new and emerging technologies raise opportunities and challenges for not only universities but also the wider social context for which universities aim to equip students (Australian Learning and Teaching Council, 2009). Ultimately, one of the most important educational goals is to improve students' knowledge, understanding and experiences, and this can be assisted through the use of technology to support teaching and learning. There are three broad areas that need to be considered in any implementation of a new technology in higher education: pedagogical, technical and administrative (Australian Learning and Teaching Council, 2009).

Furthermore, a large number of studies have shown the positive impact of modern technologies on students' cultural understanding and language acquisition (Herron, Dubreil, Cole, & Corrie, 2000). It is important for language teachers to keep up with advances in language learning technology and adopt new and stimulating approaches to teaching languages, such as promoting rich sources of authentic learning materials, including an attractive and friendly interface, interactive videos, and informative podcasts. For example, exploring electronic media through languages may include asynchronous email exchanges and synchronous chat room-type communication with language students and teachers in other countries. Researchers have also noted an increase in cultural awareness amongst students through using Internet communication tools (Motteram & Sharma, 2009; Singhal, 1997). Morgan and Throssell (2012) argue that emailing and chatting with native speakers, and downloading resources from the target language country, enables students to actively participate in the culture of the target language.

In addition, participants expressed similar positive attitudes toward the use of community resources to promote intercultural awareness among students. Foreign culture acquisition cannot be achieved merely through classroom teaching. For this reason, activities need to become more varied and demanding. It is recommended that teachers plan learning activities that encourage students to develop an awareness and appreciation of the linguistic and cultural diversity represented in the classroom. For example, one staff interviewee mentioned that

he/she had considered attempting to continue his/her association with the local community by becoming a member of the local friendship society.

Furthermore, from the perspective of teaching and program design, these findings suggested that interdisciplinary approaches to intercultural learning and communication were needed. One way of furthering this idea was to introduce a generic unit across all language programs as awareness of cultural differences in customs, behaviours and values can be managed only through effective and initiative cross-cultural communication and interaction (Han, 2013).

The results of this study also confirmed that a significant step in the process of becoming interculturally competent is the recognition that there are multiple views of the world. As previously mentioned, the expanded view of culture is a complex, dynamic area, and implementation by practitioners is still evolving. As a result, it is recommended that, in teaching practice, teachers should not only teach the basic knowledge of foreign language, but pay considerable attention to the development of students' pragmatic competence. Meanwhile, foreign language teachers must strive to improve the cultural attainment of their own continuously (Han, 2013).

Furthermore, teaching a language is more than teaching the language itself (Valdes, 1986). In a multicultural classroom, in which teachers and students come from varied backgrounds, both groups may approach situations with different cultural values and expectations about their roles, making efficient and effective cross-cultural communication highly important (Haley, et al., 2013).

Overall, this study has highlighted the value of investigating the significant role of intercultural awareness in foreign language teaching and learning within a university context. It can illuminate the current situation and future needs of both language teachers and students. More importantly, it can also help to understand better the needs and concerns of those engaged in language education. It is insightful for teachers to discover what works in relation to language education and choose approaches that better facilitate learners' learning styles and expectations. It is hoped that this kind of research can serve to foster language teachers' awareness of the learners' perspective and empathy for the commitments,

challenges, and emotions that are associated with the task of learning foreign language. Educators and policy makers are expected to take an active role in preparing students to become global citizens, and help them to develop a positive attitude towards intercultural communication.

Finally, the conclusion drawn in this study is of relevance to the review, redesign, redevelopment, teaching and support of current and future language programs at the University of Tasmania. The results of this study will hopefully yield insights into how intercultural awareness is acquired, and contribute to more effective and efficient ways of teaching and learning a foreign language. Most importantly, the insights drawn from the study will allow language educators at this particular university to propose a course redevelopment that will be conceived and designed so that other strategies can add flexibility and enhance learning in face-to-face teaching. Education paradigms are shifting to include online learning, hybrid/blended learning and collaborative models (The New Media Consortium & Griffith University, 2012). It is recommended that language teaching should focus on model approaches to teaching that incorporate culture, technology, and international exchange, program quality and sustainability, and best practices in the classroom leading to high levels of language proficiency and deeper knowledge of the target language country. It is also hoped that these rich insights will motivate and inform teachers of foreign languages to take on the task of designing and developing meaningful programs for students in the near future.

#### **6.4 Conclusion**

This chapter has discussed a holistic view of the results of this research study. It has highlighted the most important aspect of the findings and it has also provided in-depth interpretations of issues. The first section of the chapter engaged with specific issues relating to intercultural studies in foreign language teaching and learning, which have become fundamental of the teaching of many languages over the last ten years or so. The principal focus of this research was to probe the role of intercultural awareness in foreign language teaching and learning at tertiary educational level. This chapter has also compared and contrasted these findings with those of previous research projects and theories reviewed in relevant literature.

The following chapter concludes the thesis. It will provide a summary of the research findings together with their implications for policy makers. It will then highlight the significance of the study in terms of its contribution to language education research, policy and practice. It will present the future of the research and look into the possibilities of directions of further research. Lastly, it will also detail the personal meaning of the study to the researcher.

## **7. Chapter 7 – Conclusion**

### **7.1 Introduction**

In this final chapter, the results of the study are discussed in relation to the research journey and achievements. The aims and objectives are briefly revisited and there is a discussion on how these have been achieved. Certain issues that arose during the study are discussed, recommendations and implications for further research are made, and opportunities for further research in the area of the present study are suggested. This chapter then outlines the researcher's personal journey to this research study in relation to her experience of learning English, and teaching both English and Chinese language to diverse groups of students. The researcher strongly believes that her experience is reflected in the fulfilment of this research. Finally, conclusions are drawn.

### **7.2 What has been achieved**

This study sought the views and attitudes of staff members and students teaching or studying foreign languages at the University of Tasmania, in Australia, towards the significance of intercultural awareness in foreign language teaching and learning, in order to communicate interculturally in academic settings and beyond. The discussion was based on a questionnaire survey and subsequent interview research with staff members and students in this case study.

From the outcomes of this study, it can be seen that there is still much room for improvement in terms of the general level of language learners' intercultural awareness. Improving their intercultural sensitivity will help their intercultural communication more successfully and effectively, because language learners with their special educational background and professional skills can serve as bridges between different cultures. Furthermore, in an increasingly complex and multicultural society made up of values and beliefs that can be understood from different points of view, the enhancement of intercultural awareness will also better equip language learners for the upcoming responsibilities. Moreover, cultural acquisition in the study of language courses may help to make the teaching and learning of language a better experience for both teachers and

students. Most importantly, developing intercultural awareness is an ongoing process and language teachers should aim to incorporate activities which encourage learners to develop the skills of examining input, reflecting on their own experiences, comparing noticed phenomena and developing hypotheses about language and culture (McConachy, 2008).

As discussed throughout the thesis, a shift from a traditional to intercultural stance in language teaching manifests students' awareness of the inextricable and interdependent relationship between language and culture and teaching culture as an integral component of language teaching. It also helps to develop teachers' intercultural perspectives, which may impact their language teaching methodology and syllabus design. Meanwhile, this shift definitely poses a challenge that language teachers and students have to deal with in order to meet the goals of foreign language education in this global context.

As mentioned earlier, cultural awareness and cultural experiences will be best acquired when students immerse themselves in the country of the target culture (Istanto, 2009). However, when students have no opportunity to visit the target country, a degree of cultural experience can still be encountered in a language class. According to Byram (1989), the experience could be through educational visits, home stays, family trips and the like. The proposed cultural components aim to raise learners' cultural awareness and engage them cognitively, behaviourally and affectively in culture learning (Ho, 2009).

In short, as this study has shown, language and culture are intertwined to such an extent that one cannot survive without the other. It is impossible to teach language without teaching culture. The implication for language teaching and policy-making are therefore vast and far reaching. Language teachers must be culturally aware, considerate of students' culture, and inform students of cultural differences, thus promoting understanding.

The following section interprets the main findings from the literature reviewed in Chapter Two, which are then related to the results of the surveys and interviews.

### 7.3 Overall discussion of findings

This study was situated in the context of small foreign language programs within a remote university in Australia. A primary aim of this research study was to probe the participants' perceptions and beliefs about the significance of intercultural awareness in foreign language teaching and learning. Knowing participants' perceptions is of practical use to teachers and course developers in order to plan, design and deliver foreign language curriculum.

The strength of this study was that it employed both quantitative and qualitative methods to investigate the research questions. To be specific, the study used a survey questionnaire with Likert-scale responses in its quantitative phase and semi-structured interviews in its qualitative phase. The questionnaire included both multiple choice and open-ended questions intended to elicit relevant information about participants' perceptions of the significance of intercultural awareness in foreign language teaching and learning within a university context in Australia. The questionnaire items were validated after consultation with eight participants in a pilot study. The internal consistency reliability of the questionnaire was tested using Cronbach's Alpha coefficients. 293 questionnaires were returned representing a good response rate of over 59%. The analysis of the survey questionnaire was conducted with the aid of computer software SPSS (version 20.0) by using several statistical techniques. As described in the Methods chapter, firstly, the Median values of the participants' responses to each survey item were calculated. Secondly, the Kruskal-Wallis test was used to see whether statistically significant differences existed between groups, according to six independent variables (gender, age group, mother tongue, occupation, academic faculty, the language taught/studied and length of studying/teaching). Thirdly, post hoc Mann-Whitney U tests were carried out to determine where significant relationships existed.

A range of issues, highlighted in the participants' responses to the questionnaire, were investigated in more depth during follow-up interviews with 26 participants, comprising 9 teaching staff and 17 students. Furthermore, various aspects of the teaching staff and students' intercultural experiences were investigated, including their personal and professional intercultural experiences. Thematic analysis and

grounded theory were then employed in the analysis of interview data, using NVivo (version 10.0) for data management.

Analysis of the survey and interview results addressed the research questions. As presented in the previous chapters, this study aims to identify and explore issues in relation to intercultural awareness in foreign language teaching and learning at a tertiary educational context. The knowledge gained from undertaking this study, in combination with prior understanding from the literature, offers new insights into personal development, intercultural identity, and professional effectiveness in this important area of research. Taken as a whole, results from the data analysis in this study indicated that both staff members and students highly valued intercultural awareness in tertiary education areas. They would like to engage with people from different cultural backgrounds, seek common grounds, celebrate diversity and also enjoy the privileges of being intercultural.

As the participants in this study were university teaching staff and students, as well as being teachers and learners of a foreign language, some pedagogical implications can be drawn from the findings. Researchers agree that among important objectives of any foreign language program is the enhancement of the learners' cultural awareness, deepening their knowledge of the target language country and promoting a more sophisticated world view (Abrams, 2002; Vandenberg, 1990; Webber, 1990). Generally speaking, this research study has made several significant findings in relation to understanding the enhancement of intercultural awareness in foreign language teaching and learning. The first finding was that technology plays an important role in language education nowadays. The second finding concluded from this research was that the participants emphasised the factors that influence cultural integration into language programs. The third finding was that the overwhelming majority of the participants highly valued a variety of strategies to maximise learning, such as having a language partner and undertaking in-country and exchange programs.

### **7.3.1 Technology-enhanced language teaching and learning**

Firstly, without a doubt, technology has revolutionised society in many places around the globe, including transforming the way in which language instruction is

taught and delivered. As Warschauer and Healey (1998) argue, more developments in networked communication, multimedia and artificial intelligence will certainly create a potentially crucial role for the computer in relation to language exploration and use in the second language classroom. Technological and pedagogical developments now allow us to more fully integrate computer technology into the language learning process (Rahimpour, 2011). Therefore, using multiple teaching techniques will provide an inclusive learning environment for the diverse groups of language students at this university and support their development as independent learners. The development of comprehensive, flexible teaching and learning resources, including instructional technological resources will definitely serve the purpose of accompanying the learning process and enabling students to independently practise and improve their language skills.

Despite the benefits of technology, the digital age challenges teachers to take a responsible approach when choosing technology to support learning (Morgan, 2008). Some of the staff interviewees readily acknowledged that they feared going into classrooms where their students were more technologically savvy than they were. The main issue is how to best use technology in language teaching and learning to ensure its effectiveness, as technology on its own is not enough to make a difference. According to Motteram and Sharma (2009), it is the lecturer's content knowledge, and their understanding of language development and their students' needs that makes a real difference to learning. It is important for teachers to have adequate training and experience in the use of technology in teaching language. Research suggests that a teacher's poor handling of technology, whether it is underuse or overdependence, can act as a barrier to a student's learning (Educause Centre for Applied Research, 2007). Therefore, teachers need to ensure that new technology is compatible with language teaching principles and learning objectives.

Furthermore, it has been recommended that higher education institutions use emerging technologies and effective professional development to match the evolving learning styles of students (Dede, 2005). Net Generation students' familiarity with digital technologies has affected their preferences and skills in key areas related to education (Australian Learning and Teaching Council, 2009).

Prensky (2001) points out that the skills and preferences of digital native students can be contrasted markedly with those of their digital immigrant teachers. He further suggests that there is a fundamental mismatch between the language and culture of today's students and teachers. Therefore, with the integration of computer technology into language courses, now seen as common practice, the ideal learning culture should be a student-centred, constructivist approach where the student has more of an active involvement in their own learning, exploring and discovering content on their own using a wide range of technologies (Kim, 2008).

Moreover, in this study 67.9% participants welcomed the active TELL approach, but they still realised the value of traditional learning. However, in most cases in language learning, the learning in classrooms bore little or no connection to language learning or language use in the world outside of school (Larsen-Freeman & Freeman, 2008). In the context of this university, one attempt to address this problem came in a Chinese history, society and culture component at the beginning level Chinese class. It is noteworthy that the students had positive attitudes toward this cultural element introduced in the course. They indicated that the cultural components provided them with better insights into the context of Chinese language. They also gained social and psychological advantages with increased cultural awareness. Therefore, in order to achieve this goal, teachers and students of language studies must share their knowledge and work as a team in a cooperative learning environment.

### **7.3.2 Influential factors on cultural integration**

Secondly, the participants identified the factors that influence the incorporation of cultural study into language programs. As discussed previously, most staff interviewees understood that they should include a cultural component where needed or allowed and many claimed that culture is implicit in their classes and something that learners acquire automatically. As a result, this generally made the process of cultural learning haphazard, without any clear objectives as to what language students should learn in relation to culture.

Therefore, it was suggested that in future teaching, multiple cultural elements can be used in order to address students' different interests and learning styles as well

as to maximise the benefits derived from the relevant cultural materials available at the university. It is also worth exploring the potential to incorporate cultural activities into the language classroom as a way of catering for different levels, and as a means of encouraging learners to develop intercultural awareness. This factor was also evident in the extant literature. For example, in terms of Chinese language, Zhiqun Xing (2006) argues that, with limited resources, it is still a challenge to design interesting and enjoyable activities that help students learn cultural elements in language classes, and also to determine the content and amount of Chinese culture that can or should be included in language classroom. She also proposes different cultural elements/concepts for Chinese classes at the elementary, intermediate and advanced levels and suggests that cultural elements should be classified and taught according to their degree of difficulty, importance, abstraction and contextualisation.

### **7.3.3 Learning strategies**

Thirdly, 93.5% participants considered a number of learning strategies to overcome current constraints to maximising their learning. For example, having a language partner can undoubtedly assist students with vocabulary, and dialogue drills help to correct pronunciation and grammar mistakes, assist students to develop sensitivity to language learning, and integrate students into daily life conversations. Ideally, language students should be paired with native speakers, or perhaps a language exchange friend, with similar academic backgrounds and interests. For example, at this university both the Chinese and Japanese language programs have established conversation exchange programs with native speakers. It is possible that this may also be extended to other language programs. Another example was an intermediate Japanese conversation class, which interacted directly via Skype with the students in an English conversation class at a university in Japan. Such experiences allow students to engage in instant sharing and also provide them with rich social and cultural interaction with other learners.

Moreover, as discussed previously, in the language teaching community there is unanimous agreement that in-country study of the language is critical to true proficiency. Fleming (2009) argues that it would be difficult to acquire intercultural competence in an instructional setting without any application to real

situations. The immersion experience brings about a significant improvement in the way students approach language learning. Without doubt, a successful in-country program can: provide an effective means of helping students gain deeper insights into the local society; improve their language skills intensively through exposure to colloquial language in a real life environment; increase their understanding of the value of intercultural communication; and have them learn to think critically about their own culture and behaviours in the context of different cultural backgrounds. Additionally, students will also have opportunities to improve character development by learning to become more tolerant, adaptable, and confident. However, in this study several student participants indicated the difficulties and challenges they faced in participating in in-country language programs, including financial issues and the balance between work and family commitments.

In summary, the findings of this current study shed some light on teaching language and culture in integrated ways at the university and what teachers do to promote culture-sensitive learning in everyday practice. It needs to be borne in mind, however, that this study is of an exploratory nature and has a number of limitations. In addition, the findings cast a new light on future language program design and development. Furthermore, these findings can be used for guidance in identifying how to assist Australian institutions and educators to contribute towards a better understanding of how intercultural awareness should be dealt with adequately in higher education, especially in foreign language teaching and learning. Intercultural knowledge and sensitivity are elementary soft skills for international co-operation. The ability to put oneself into somebody else's shoes is an essential requirement in today's professional world (Vogel, 2001).

The findings of this study can also increase understanding of multicultural education that is needed with respect to foreign language and culture programs. The study also found that by taking advantage of the current features of existing language programs, some integrated strategies and support programs would enable both staff members and students to achieve better relationships and greater academic and personal fulfilment. Most importantly, surveys and interviews with teaching staff and students were important in determining whether intercultural

awareness is indeed significant in foreign language teaching and learning at higher education contexts.

#### **7.4 Recommendations and implications**

The results of this study provide researchers with a better understanding of intercultural awareness in tertiary education settings. It is also noticeable that the study of intercultural communication can awaken people's cultural sensitivity, have them reflect on ethnocentrism and help the cultivation of an open attitude and the general development of a healthy personality. In the process of the study of intercultural awareness, people can understand their own culture better and from new perspectives, as well as learn about and assimilate the cultural achievements of other cultures. It is widely believed that the global citizen of today needs to have acquired foreign language skills, as well as specific skills in intercultural communication, therefore foreign language learning in institutions of higher education must be closely linked to the academic subjects which students study (Vogel, 2001).

This section discusses recommendations and implications from the study and also provides explanations where applicable. Firstly, investigations have been conducted exclusively in the field of tertiary education, and this could potentially limit the findings in terms of their generalisability to other contexts. Researchers interested in the study of intercultural awareness need to be mindful that the findings of this study may not be transferable to their own contexts. Therefore, an all-round approach to studying intercultural awareness should be developed and it is also hoped that the increasing presence of international students on campuses will provide opportunities for the enhancement and development of intercultural awareness.

Secondly, it is recommended that further research be conducted using a larger sample size (e.g., by including distance undergraduate language students, postgraduate students) and more refined research instruments, in order to increase the statistical power of the data. The examination of a larger sample may also give greater insight into the effects of age, gender and experiences with other cultures on participants' responses. This recommendation supports Ward's (2001) view

that what is clearly needed is more research on local students, multicultural classrooms, more institutions, and even the broader community.

Finally, from the research findings, some recommendations can be made for the development of effective communication, which would contribute to reducing misunderstandings between people, and enhance language students' learning experiences at universities in Australia. For example, peer-programs are used to assist international students to adapt to a new culture and educational environment. These programs have also been used successfully to increase intercultural interactions (Ward, 2001). Another significant aspect is that most practitioners in international educational interchange believe that intercultural experiences have beneficial results for individual participants and, over time, for their respective societies. Studying and living abroad are seen as ways of fostering broadmindedness, tolerance, and the ability to deal constructively with people who are different (Valdes, 1986).

In summary, recommendations based on the findings of this research study fall into three categories: the promotion of intercultural awareness among staff as well as students; assisting staff members and students to improve the effectiveness of their intercultural communication; and assisting language students to take advantage of the cultural learning opportunities available on campus and beyond. All of these recommendations have implications for teaching methodology and course content. The fact that differences and cultural misunderstandings or even conflicts unavoidably exist within the cross-cultural context should be understood. As intercultural enhancement is much needed in a rapidly changing and interactive world, language learners should concentrate on improving target language proficiency and extending experiences in the target culture. Furthermore, language students should increase and develop intercultural awareness and improve intercultural competency. Deficiency of intercultural awareness and low intercultural competency will negatively influence academic achievement. Needless to say, students also benefit by increasing their personal satisfaction in the learning process. The teachers' role in the classroom has changed from being that of a controller to that of being a facilitator of learning in order to help students become more independent, and more responsible for their own learning.

Ultimately, students gain more confidence in learning and using the target language.

### **7.5 Future research**

This study should be regarded as a preliminary investigation, and further research is needed to extend the generalisability of the findings. Further research should enrich the data collection process using instruments such as document analysis, additional questionnaires, classroom observations, and an analysis of the values, perceptions and beliefs of the cultures under investigation. However, whether the same results would be found in other student populations needs to be determined.

This study highlights an issue of considerable importance for developing intercultural awareness and improving intercultural communications, contributing to a growing inter-disciplinary literature in this area. However, the present study only specifically investigated the significance of intercultural awareness in foreign language teaching and learning at one university. As previously stated in the Methods Chapter, some aspects of this study could not be fully explored due to its limited scope. The following questions could be addressed in future study:

- In what ways do language textbooks, additional print and digital teaching resources impact foreign language classroom interaction?
- How do future teaching resources need to be designed in order to be up-to-date with the current standards of foreign language teaching and modern technology?
- How can such a design meet the conditions of learning-centred classroom interaction in an age of increasing linguistic and cultural diversity and the diverse expectations of language learners?

The current findings, however, demonstrate the importance of further research on issues of intercultural studies in Australia in general. As such, this study provides additional insights into the field of intercultural studies in this particular state, involving teaching staff and students in foreign language programs at the university. Therefore, this study may lead to further research of a larger population and setting in order to obtain results which are generalisable across the universities in the nation.

## 7.6 Personal journey to research

In the fields of social sciences and humanities, it is virtually impossible to ignore researchers' personal experiences, as the relationship between a researcher and his or her research is multifaceted. Therefore, in order to understand what initially inspired the researcher to conduct this research study, it is helpful to share the researcher's personal and professional background.

The researcher's background and early life experiences were as a teacher in China, where she enjoyed teaching and was particularly interested in language education. She also realised that language education presented more and more challenges to both developed and developing countries. As Guntermann (1993, p. 69) points out, "second languages and cultures education in the twenty-first century will be faced with the question of whether it will contribute to the development of a multicultural society". As far as the researcher is concerned, the language environment is of great importance in language teaching and learning. That is to say, an authentic language environment assists students to improve their ability to employ languages and their knowledge of the target culture as they become globally competent and the citizens of an ever-shrinking world.

In particular, the researcher was influenced greatly by her intellectual family, almost all of whom have overseas life experiences. This led the researcher to become more and more curious about foreign countries, to the point at which she could not help wanting to find out what these countries are like one day. The researcher's great interest in English language as well as English-speaking countries was the most important factor for her overseas experiences. This fits with Harmer's (1991, p. 2) understanding that:

some students study a foreign language because they are attracted to the culture of one of the target language community. They learn the language because they want to know more about the people who speak it, the places where it is spoken and the writings which it has produced.

To summarise the researcher's life changing experience of studying, working and living in Australia, she would like to quote a statement from Paige, Cohen, Kappler, Chi and Lassegard (2002, p. 103): "my life is enriched by my

relationships with people from different backgrounds and experiences”. She has met a lot of friends from all over the world and “usually tr[ies] to behave appropriately in intercultural situations and look at the things from multiple perspectives, but I can also maintain my values and beliefs” (Paige, et al., 2002, p. 104).

From the researcher’s personal study and teaching experience in different levels of schooling and a variety of educational settings, she came to believe that learning a foreign language and having interpersonal contact with native speakers from that culture definitely helps one receive a profound education. As research shows that language teachers are fundamentally concerned with how language works in communication: with the relationships between utterance and context, language and culture, language and personality, and with language as action (Alred, Byram, & Fleming, 2002 cited in Millar; Cortazzi & Jin, 1997; Gumperz, 1982; Nelson, Freedman, & Anderson, 2001).

In this context, more efficient and effective ways of learning the language are of vital importance. The goal for teaching a foreign language is to develop students’ ability to apply speaking, listening, reading and writing skills in this language. Moreover, language teaching is not just teaching language itself, it is embedded with cultural meaning. The development of multiple language skills is needed to teach students language as well as its associated culture. In the field of foreign language acquisition, the main focus is to cultivate students’ communicative competence in real-life situations. As Liddicoat and Crozet (2000) argue, “communicative competence is now being redefined in terms of cross-cultural understanding, intercultural and critical communicative competence” (p. 3).

To sum up, the genesis of this research study was the researcher’s own experience as a lifetime learner of English. Most importantly, the researcher – as a language teacher who has an abiding interest in the relationship between language and culture – has gained from undertaking research in this area. In particular, the researcher has been a primary school classroom teacher, an English teacher and administrative officer of a technical secondary school, an Assistant Adviser for International Services, an ESL teacher at an English Language Centre, an ESL teacher at TAFE and a University lecturer in Chinese language. These roles have

engendered a capacity within the researcher to be involved in different levels of schooling and opportunities to work with a wide range of personnel in a variety of educational settings. This has connected the researcher with a diverse group of learners with rather different understandings of intercultural awareness in foreign language teaching and learning. The researcher's current role, working with undergraduates within the university setting, provides another dimension through which to gain perspectives on foreign language teaching. This intensive teaching experience has also enabled the researcher to explore more deeply her personal beliefs and understandings of intercultural awareness in language education and beyond.

### **7.7 Conclusion**

This research study provides insights into the views and attitudes of teachers and students towards intercultural awareness in foreign language teaching and learning at tertiary level. This final chapter has discussed the overall findings of the study in relation to its objectives and the relevant literature. It has also summarised these findings with those of previous research projects and theories reviewed in relevant literature.

Globalisation demands the enhancement of intercultural communication among people from diverse cultures in order to survive in the twenty-first century. In the contemporary world, efforts at improving intercultural communication play an increasingly important role (Zhao & Edmondson, 2005). As discussed, "more people than ever before in the history of the world now have both direct and indirect contact with each other, and increasingly, this contact includes people from a variety of diverse language and cultural backgrounds" (Deardorff, 2009, p. 456). Surfing the Internet, watching satellite television, travelling or studying abroad enable frequent intercultural interactions between people (Stier, 2003). Particularly in the current age of globalisation, migration and digital communication, developing intercultural communicative competence has become a priority in university and school education. However, at the same time, miscommunication between cultures and resulting misunderstandings seem to be high (Nixon & Bull, 2005; Ting-Toomey & Korzenny, 1989). Obviously there is an increasing need for people to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills, and

appropriate attitudes, in order to achieve successful intercultural communication (Nixon & Bull, 2005) and be able to function in a global world (Stier, 2003). As an indispensable element, intercultural awareness becomes critical for a productive and successful life in the ever shifting social, cultural, economic and technological reality that defines the shrinking world of the twenty-first century.

Moreover, by interacting with people from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds, students are able to fulfil their academic goals, but also to develop as humans – emotionally, intellectually, culturally and academically (Stier, 2003). Additionally, during the language learning process, students have the opportunity to approach the diversity of cultures, learn to appreciate similarities and respect differences between cultures, promote international experiences, become aware of potential problems in intercultural communication and develop an ability to deal with them. Additionally, a better understanding of their own native culture will be gained.

As Stier (2003) points out, the profound role of higher education and policies on ethnic diversity and internationalisation seems indisputable. To ensure a sufficiently large and skilful labour force, adequate to meet the demands of an increasingly complex global and multicultural marketplace, the university is responsible for providing students with the necessary information, knowledge and skills (Stier, 2006). Language education is fundamental to this process, as language is a skill that will be valuable throughout learners' lives. Although the implementation of proposed strategies may still remain relatively problematic, many recommended areas for improvement are relatively cost-free and can utilise existing institutional resources (e.g., language support programs, in-country programs, and the community support).

In addition, it is noticeable that the findings of this study could be beneficial to foreign language learners globally in terms of improving language skills, cultivating cultural awareness, and ultimately transforming linguistic competence into communicative competence in an effective way. The findings may enhance cultural awareness amongst students and staff, and increase their sense of effective communication. As indicated in Chapter One, the aim of this study was to investigate the perceptions of academic staff members and students towards the

significance of intercultural awareness in foreign language teaching and learning in an Australian university context. It is impossible to expound all the details of culture and communication, as they encompass almost every aspect of a person's life. But armed with this awareness, people can design their own strategies for dealing with many of the problems arising in intercultural communication situations.

To conclude, this study has investigated and addressed some issues relating to intercultural awareness in tertiary education in Australia. However, intercultural communication seems to be a very popular subject outside of the university sector, with practitioners working in a multicultural society (Jensen, 2005). Hopefully, this research study will present new insights into intercultural awareness, as well as being useful in the development of more effective intercultural communication and better relationships between people from different cultural backgrounds, reducing misperceptions and misunderstandings. Most importantly, this research study provides some important insights into future development and design of language programs that embody these implications and suggestions to contribute to empowered, interactive, and inspired student language learning. The best language programs are more than mere classes within the walls of a school – they are jumping-off points for explorations in and beyond the target language that offer students the opportunity to interact and communicate across linguistic and cultural borders, and to develop a range of cognitive and academic skills that can be applied across subject areas (Asia Society, 2013b).

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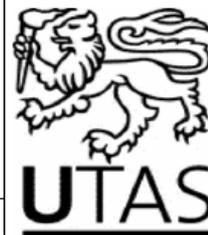
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## **Appendix A – Ethics approval**

MEMORANDUM

Social Science Ethics Officer  
 Private Bag 01 Hobart  
 Tasmania 7001 Australia  
 Tel: (03) 6226 2764  
 Fax: (03) 6226 7148  
 Marilyn.Knott@utas.edu.au



HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (TASMANIA) NETWORK

**MINIMAL RISK ETHICS APPLICATION APPROVAL**

15 July 2010

Dr Thao Le  
 Education  
 Private Bag 1307  
 Launceston

**Ethics Reference: H11274**

**Views and attitudes of students and staff members towards the significance of intercultural awareness in foreign language teaching and learning in an Australian University context.**

Dear Dr Le

Acting on a mandate from the Tasmania Social Sciences HREC, the Chair of the committee considered and approved the above project on 15 July 2010.

Please note that this approval is for four years and is conditional upon receipt of an annual Progress Report. Ethics approval for this project will lapse if a Progress Report is not submitted.

The following conditions apply to this approval. Failure to abide by these conditions may result in suspension or discontinuation of approval.

1. It is the responsibility of the Chief Investigator to ensure that all investigators are aware of the terms of approval, to ensure the project is conducted as approved by the Ethics Committee, and to notify the Committee if any investigators are added to, or cease involvement with, the project.
2. Complaints: If any complaints are received or ethical issues arise during the course of the project, investigators should advise the Executive Officer of the Ethics Committee on 03 6226 7479 or [human.ethics@utas.edu.au](mailto:human.ethics@utas.edu.au).
3. Incidents or adverse effects: Investigators should notify the Ethics Committee immediately of any serious or unexpected adverse effects on participants or unforeseen events affecting the ethical acceptability of the project.

A PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

4. Amendments to Project: Modifications to the project must not proceed until approval is obtained from the Ethics Committee. Please submit an Amendment Form (available on our website) to notify the Ethics Committee of the proposed modifications.
5. Annual Report: Continued approval for this project is dependent on the submission of a Progress Report by the anniversary date of your approval. You will be sent a courtesy reminder closer to this date. **Failure to submit a Progress Report will mean that ethics approval for this project will lapse.**
6. Final Report: A Final Report and a copy of any published material arising from the project, either in full or abstract, must be provided at the end of the project.

Yours sincerely



Melanie Horder  
Ethics Officer

## **Appendix B – Questionnaire for teaching staff**

Locked Bag 1307 Launceston  
Tasmania 7250 Australia  
Telephone: (03) 6324 3046; Fax: (03) 6324 3652  
Email: [Thao.Le@utas.edu.au](mailto:Thao.Le@utas.edu.au); [Yanjun.Wang@utas.edu.au](mailto:Yanjun.Wang@utas.edu.au)  
Website: [www.utas.edu.au/educ](http://www.utas.edu.au/educ)



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## Faculty of Education - University of Tasmania

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### QUESTIONNAIRE (Staff)

This questionnaire consists of two parts and is designed to collect data about your views and attitudes towards intercultural awareness in foreign language teaching. It takes about 10 minutes to complete it and your assistance will be deeply appreciated. If you are interested in participating in a 30 minutes' interview, please contact the researchers for further information.

(Note: Intercultural awareness is about understanding other cultures.)

#### Part I: Demographic Information

1. Gender  a. Male  b. Female
2. Age  a. 20-30yrs  b. 31-40yrs  c. 41-50yrs  d. over 50 yrs
3. English is your mother tongue  
 a. Yes  b. No (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
4. School at which you work  
 a. School of Asian Languages & Studies  
 b. School of English, Journalism and European Languages
5. Language which you teach at your School  
 a. Chinese  b. French  c. German  d. Indonesian  
 e. Japanese

6. Years of teaching languages at this University  a. less than 2yrs

b. 2-5yrs  c. over 5yrs-10yrs  d. over 10 yrs

**Part II: Please circle your most appropriate response.**

Directions: Please indicate your most appropriate response by using the following criteria:

SA= Strongly Agree

A= Agree

NS= Not Sure

D= Disagree

SD= Strongly Disagree

No.	About Australia and the World	Weighted scores
7	Australia is a nation of cultural diversity.	SA A NS D SD
8	Intercultural awareness is important to Australia.	SA A NS D SD
9	International students are an important source of intercultural awareness.	SA A NS D SD
No.	Personal intercultural experience	Weighted scores
10	I like to interact with people from different cultural backgrounds.	SA A NS D SD
11	I like eating food from other countries.	SA A NS D SD
12	I like to travel overseas.	SA A NS D SD
No.	Aspects of intercultural awareness	Weighted scores
13	Intercultural awareness enriches one's life.	SA A NS D SD

14	Intercultural awareness widens one's worldview.	SA A NS D SD
15	Intercultural awareness enhances the understanding of one's own culture.	SA A NS D SD
16	Intercultural awareness enhances world peace.	SA A NS D SD
17	Intercultural awareness is hard to develop.	SA A NS D SD
18	Travel enhances intercultural awareness.	SA A NS D SD
19	Interacting with migrants enhances intercultural awareness.	SA A NS D SD
20	Interacting with international students enhances intercultural awareness.	SA A NS D SD
21	The internet plays an important role in intercultural awareness.	SA A NS D SD
No.	Intercultural awareness and language learning	Weighted scores
22	Learning a language involves learning its culture.	SA A NS D SD
23	Cultural component of a language course provides a meaningful context for language learning.	SA A NS D SD
24	Cultural component of a language course enhances students' motivation towards the target language.	SA A NS D SD
25	Cultural component of a language course promotes students' curiosity about the target culture.	SA A NS D SD
26	Cultural component of a language course does not impede students' language acquisition.	SA A NS D SD
No.	Intercultural awareness in course design	Weighted scores
27	Teaching about culture should be a part of a	SA A NS D SD

	language course.	
28	Culture teaching should be integrated into language teaching.	SA A NS D SD
29	In-country experience should be included in a language program.	SA A NS D SD
30	Native speaking teachers should be included in a language program.	SA A NS D SD
31	Students in a language program should be introduced to native speakers of the target language.	SA A NS D SD
32	Exchange students should be introduced in a language program.	SA A NS D SD
33	Textbooks in a language program should be written by native speakers of the target language.	SA A NS D SD
34	Translation should be avoided in language teaching.	SA A NS D SD
35	Apart from textbooks, there are other useful resources for teaching in a language program.	SA A NS D SD
36	A language other than English should be taught as a compulsory unit in the Education course.	SA A NS D SD
37	A language other than English should be taught as a compulsory unit in the Nursing course.	SA A NS D SD
38	A language other than English should be taught as a compulsory unit in the Law course.	SA A NS D SD
39	A language other than English should be taught as a compulsory unit in the Business/Commerce	SA A NS D SD

	course.	
40	A language other than English should be taught as a compulsory unit in the Science course.	SA A NS D SD
41	A language other than English should be taught as a compulsory unit in the Arts course.	SA A NS D SD
No.	Personal experience in a language program	Weighted scores
42	The language program I have taught is too theoretical.	SA A NS D SD
43	The language program I have taught places too much attention to the language side.	SA A NS D SD
44	The language program I have taught deals adequately with intercultural awareness.	SA A NS D SD
45	The language program I have taught helps me to appreciate other cultures.	SA A NS D SD
46	The language program I have taught inspires me to interact with people of different cultures.	SA A NS D SD
47	The language program I have taught enhances my intercultural awareness.	SA A NS D SD

**Any other relevant information you wish to add?**

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## **Appendix C – Questionnaire for students**

Locked Bag 1307 Launceston  
Tasmania 7250 Australia  
Telephone: (03) 6324 3046; Fax: (03) 6324 3652  
Email: [Thao.Le@utas.edu.au](mailto:Thao.Le@utas.edu.au); [Yanjun.Wang@utas.edu.au](mailto:Yanjun.Wang@utas.edu.au)  
Website: [www.utas.edu.au/educ](http://www.utas.edu.au/educ)



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## Faculty of Education - University of Tasmania

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### QUESTIONNAIRE (Student)

This questionnaire consists of two parts and is designed to collect data about your views and attitudes towards intercultural awareness in foreign language teaching. It takes about 10 minutes to complete it and your assistance will be deeply appreciated. If you are interested in participating in a 30 minutes' interview, please contact the researchers for further information. (Note: Intercultural awareness is about understanding other cultures.)

#### Part I: Demographic Information

1. Gender  a. Male  b. Female
  
2. Age  a. 17-23yrs  b. 24-35yrs  
 c. 36-45yrs  d. over 45 yrs
  
3. English is your mother tongue  
 a. Yes  b. No (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
  
4. Faculty in which you have done most of your study this year  
 a. Education  b. Science/Computing/Engineering  
 c. Commerce/Business  d. Health science/Pharmacy/Nursing  
 e. Law  f. Arts (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
  
5. Language(s) which you study at this University  
 a. Chinese  b. French  c. German

d. Indonesian     e. Japanese

6. Years of studying at this University

a. 0- 1yr     b. over 1yr-3yrs     c. over 3yrs

7. Category of Students

a. International Students     b. Domestic Students

**Part II: Please circle your most appropriate response.**

Directions: Please indicate your most appropriate response by using the following criteria:

SA= Strongly Agree

A= Agree

NS= Not Sure

D= Disagree

SD= Strongly Disagree

No.	About Australia and the World	Weighted scores
8	Australia is a nation of cultural diversity.	SA A NS D SD
9	Intercultural awareness is important to Australia.	SA A NS D SD
10	International students are an important source of intercultural awareness.	SA A NS D SD
No.	Personal intercultural experience	Weighted scores
11	I like to interact with people from different cultural backgrounds.	SA A NS D SD
12	I like eating food from other countries.	SA A NS D SD

13	I like to travel overseas.	SA A NS D SD
No.	Aspects of intercultural awareness	Weighted scores
14	Intercultural awareness enriches one's life.	SA A NS D SD
15	Intercultural awareness widens one's worldview.	SA A NS D SD
16	Intercultural awareness enhances the understanding of one's own culture.	SA A NS D SD
17	Intercultural awareness enhances world peace.	SA A NS D SD
18	Intercultural awareness is hard to develop.	SA A NS D SD
19	Travel enhances intercultural awareness.	SA A NS D SD
20	Interacting with migrants enhances intercultural awareness.	SA A NS D SD
21	Interacting with international students enhances intercultural awareness.	SA A NS D SD
22	The internet plays an important role in intercultural awareness.	SA A NS D SD
No.	Intercultural awareness and language learning	Weighted scores
23	Learning a language involves learning its culture.	SA A NS D SD
24	Cultural component of a language course provides a meaningful context for language learning.	SA A NS D SD
25	Cultural component of a language course enhances students' motivation towards the target language.	SA A NS D SD
26	Cultural component of a language course promotes students' curiosity about the target culture.	SA A NS D SD

27	Cultural component of a language course does not impede students' language acquisition.	SA A NS D SD
No.	Intercultural awareness in course design	Weighted scores
28	Teaching about culture should be a part of a language course.	SA A NS D SD
29	Culture teaching should be integrated into language teaching.	SA A NS D SD
30	In-country experience should be included in a language program.	SA A NS D SD
31	Native speaking teachers should be included in a language program.	SA A NS D SD
32	Students in a language program should be introduced to native speakers of the target language.	SA A NS D SD
33	Exchange students should be introduced in a language program.	SA A NS D SD
34	Textbooks in a language program should be written by native speakers of the target language.	SA A NS D SD
35	Translation should be avoided in language teaching.	SA A NS D SD
36	Apart from textbooks, there are other useful resources for teaching in a language program.	SA A NS D SD
37	A language other than English should be taught as a compulsory unit in the Education course.	SA A NS D SD
38	A language other than English should be taught as	SA A NS D SD

	a compulsory unit in the Nursing course.	
39	A language other than English should be taught as a compulsory unit in the Law course.	SA A NS D SD
40	A language other than English should be taught as a compulsory unit in the Business/Commerce course.	SA A NS D SD
41	A language other than English should be taught as a compulsory unit in the Science course.	SA A NS D SD
42	A language other than English should be taught as a compulsory unit in the Arts course.	SA A NS D SD
No.	Personal experience in a language program	Weighted scores
43	The language program I have studied is too theoretical.	SA A NS D SD
44	The language program I have studied places too much attention to the language side.	SA A NS D SD
45	The language program I have studied deals adequately with intercultural awareness.	SA A NS D SD
46	The language program I have studied helps me to appreciate other cultures.	SA A NS D SD
47	The language program I have studied inspires me to interact with people of different cultures.	SA A NS D SD
48	The language program I have studied enhances my intercultural awareness.	SA A NS D SD

**Any other relevant information you wish to add?**

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## **Appendix D – Interview schedule and questions for teaching staff**

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Locked Bag 1307 Launceston  
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Telephone: (03) 6324 3046; Fax: (03) 6324 3652  
Email: [Thao.Le@utas.edu.au](mailto:Thao.Le@utas.edu.au); [Yanjun.Wang@utas.edu.au](mailto:Yanjun.Wang@utas.edu.au)  
Website: [www.utas.edu.au/educ](http://www.utas.edu.au/educ)



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## Faculty of Education - University of Tasmania

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Tasmania Social Sciences HREC Reference: H11274

**Views and attitudes of staff and students members towards the significance of intercultural awareness in foreign language teaching and learning in an Australian university context:**

### INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

**Interviewee:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Interviewer:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**School:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Participant No.:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Place:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Age:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Gender:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Interview starting time:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Interview finishing time:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Interview duration:** \_\_\_\_\_

## INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

*Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research project.*

*I would now like your responses to the following questions, please.*

*There are 10 questions. Please feel free to give as much detail as you wish in your answers. If you are unclear about the meaning of any question, please ask for clarification.*

Which language(s) do you teach?

1. How would you define “intercultural awareness”?
2. What does “intercultural awareness” mean to you?
3. How do you incorporate “intercultural awareness” into your language teaching?
4. What has been your most positive intercultural experience?
5. What has been your most negative intercultural experience?
6. How have your ideas about “intercultural awareness” changed since you started to teach a language?
7. What particular experience helped to make those changes?
8. Are you satisfied with the ways that you utilise your knowledge and skills of “intercultural awareness” to support your teaching? If not, what are your expectations?
9. How could “intercultural awareness” teaching be improved in your school?

*This concludes the questions for the interview. Thank you very much for your responses.*

## **Appendix E – Interview schedule and questions for students**

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Locked Bag 1307 Launceston  
Tasmania 7250 Australia  
Telephone: (03) 6324 3046; Fax: (03) 6324 3652  
Email: [Thao.Le@utas.edu.au](mailto:Thao.Le@utas.edu.au); [Yanjun.Wang@utas.edu.au](mailto:Yanjun.Wang@utas.edu.au)  
Website: [www.utas.edu.au/educ](http://www.utas.edu.au/educ)



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## Faculty of Education - University of Tasmania

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Tasmania Social Sciences HREC Reference: H11274

**Views and attitudes of staff and students members towards the significance of intercultural awareness in foreign language teaching and learning in an Australian university context:**

### INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

**Interviewee:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Interviewer:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**School:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Participant No.:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Place:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Age:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Gender:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Year:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Interview starting time:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Interview finishing time:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Interview duration:** \_\_\_\_\_

## INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

*Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research project.*

*I would now like your responses to the following questions, please.*

*There are 9 questions. Please feel free to give as much detail as you wish in your answers. If you are unclear about the meaning of any question, please ask for clarification.*

1. Which language(s) do you learn?
2. How do you interpret the notion of “intercultural awareness”?
3. What does “intercultural awareness” mean to you?
4. How important is “intercultural awareness” in your language learning?
5. What has been your most positive intercultural experience?
6. What has been your most negative intercultural experience?
7. How have your ideas about intercultural awareness changed since you started to learn a language?
8. What particular experience helped to make those changes?
9. How could “intercultural awareness” teaching be improved in your school?

*This concludes the questions for the interview. Thank you very much for your responses.*

## **Appendix F – Email to Head of School**



**Email to Head of School**

Dear (Head of School),

My name is Yanjun Wang. I am currently undertaking PhD study being supervised by Dr Thao Lê and Dr Paul Throssell in the Faculty of Education, University of Tasmania. This research study entitled, '*Views and attitudes of staff and students members towards the significance of intercultural awareness in foreign language teaching and learning in an Australian university context*'. I would like to ask for your help in my data collection with your staff members as well as students. Please see the attached information sheet for detailed information about this study. In addition, copies of information sheets for both questionnaires and interviews and consent form for interview are attached.

I would be very appreciative if you could allow us to involve your staff members and students in this study.

Thank you for your assistance.

Yours sincerely,

Yanjun Wang

## **Appendix G – Information sheet for Head of School**

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Locked Bag 1307 Launceston  
Tasmania 7250 Australia  
Telephone: (03) 6324 3046; Fax: (03) 6324 3652  
Email: [Thao.Le@utas.edu.au](mailto:Thao.Le@utas.edu.au); [Yanjun.Wang@utas.edu.au](mailto:Yanjun.Wang@utas.edu.au)  
Website: [www.utas.edu.au/educ](http://www.utas.edu.au/educ)



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## Faculty of Education - University of Tasmania

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### Information Sheet for HEAD OF SCHOOL

*Title: Views and attitudes of staff and students members towards the significance of intercultural awareness in foreign language teaching and learning in an Australian university context*

**Invitation:** Your school is invited to participate in a research study into views and attitudes of staff and students members towards the significance of intercultural awareness in foreign language teaching and learning at the University of Tasmania. We would appreciate your assistance by making this research project known to your academic staff and students. Moreover, we would be very appreciative if you could allow us to involve your staff members and students in this study. We hope that both your academic staff and students will be happy to participate in a questionnaire and also in an interview. The study is being undertaken by the chief investigator, Dr. Thao Lê, and Yanjun Wang who is a PhD student at the University of Tasmania. Yanjun Wang is being supervised by Dr Thao Lê and Dr Paul Throssell.

**Purpose of the study:** Based on the increasing awareness of intercultural communication in tertiary education in Australia, this study investigates the perceptions of students as well as academic staff members of the significance of intercultural awareness in foreign language teaching and learning in an Australian university context. The investigator will use questionnaires with participants to examine their perceptions towards the significance of intercultural awareness in foreign language teaching and learning at the University of Tasmania. Participants will also be invited to semi-structured interviews, which will help investigate ways/approaches to deal with intercultural awareness in Australian universities.

Participation in this study is voluntary and any research data gathered during this study will be kept confidential. Also the identity of the participants will be kept

confidential, and any information your teaching staff or students supply will not identify them as participants.

Taking part in the study involves the following:

**For the questionnaire:** With your permission, our questionnaires with a stamped addressed return envelope will be made available at your school. Also this questionnaire will be available online (Qualtrics survey software) in an electronic version for the teaching staff and students who would be interested in doing this questionnaire online. The questionnaires will take approximately 8-10 minutes to complete. Completion and submission of the questionnaires signifies participants' consent to participate in the questionnaire part of the study. In addition, a box will be placed in the office of the Faculty of Education for those who choose this method to return the questionnaire. The researchers will also return in the following week to collect the questionnaires.

Please note that the questionnaire does not request any identifying questions or items and all information will be not identifiable and individual identity will remain confidential. The completed questionnaires will be kept locked in Dr Le's office and will be shredded after five years.

**For the interview:** Teaching staff and students who indicate their willingness to participate in an interview and only twenty will be selected and then will be contacted by email or telephone to arrange an appropriate time and date to undertake the interview. We will also leave information sheets and consent forms for the interview for people to pick up if they wish. Participants will need to allow about 30 minutes for an individual face-to-face interview with Yanjun Wang. The interview will be audio-recorded to aid in accurate transcription of the information for data analysis. Copies of the transcription of the interview may be supplied to them upon request, and they may, if they wish, edit or modify what they earlier contributed. They will be provided with a guide to the types of questions they will be asked prior to the interview.

The Human Research Ethics Committee (Tasmania) Network has approved this study (Reference number: H11274). If you have any concerns about the manner in which the project is conducted, you may contact the Executive Officer of the

Human Research ethics committee (Tasmania) who can be contacted on (03) 6226 7479 or [human.ethics@utas.edu.au](mailto:human.ethics@utas.edu.au).

If you are happy for your academic staff members and students to take part in this study, please contact the chief investigator Dr. Thao Lê at [Thao.Le@utas.edu.au](mailto:Thao.Le@utas.edu.au), or the PhD student Yanjun Wang at [Yanjun.Wang@utas.edu.au](mailto:Yanjun.Wang@utas.edu.au).

More information on the study can be obtained from the chief investigator Dr. Thao Lê, phone (03) 6324 3696, or the PhD student Yanjun Wang, phone (03) 6324 3046 Thank you for taking the time to consider this study and we look forward to your reply.

Yours sincerely



Dr. Thao Lê

Yanjun Wang

## **Appendix H – Information sheet for Questionnaire**

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Locked Bag 1307 Launceston  
Tasmania 7250 Australia  
Telephone: (03) 6324 3046; Fax: (03) 6324 3652  
Email: [Thao.Le@utas.edu.au](mailto:Thao.Le@utas.edu.au); [Yanjun.Wang@utas.edu.au](mailto:Yanjun.Wang@utas.edu.au)  
Website: [www.utas.edu.au/educ](http://www.utas.edu.au/educ)



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## Faculty of Education - University of Tasmania

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### Information Sheet for QUESTIONNAIRE

(FOR STAFF AND STUDENTS)

*Title: Views and attitudes of staff and students members towards the significance of intercultural awareness in foreign language teaching and learning in an Australian university context*

**Invitation:** You are invited to participate in a research study into views and attitudes of staff and students members towards the significance of intercultural awareness in foreign language teaching and learning at the University of Tasmania. The study is being undertaken by the chief investigator, Dr. Thao Lê, and Yanjun Wang who is a PhD student at the University of Tasmania. Yanjun Wang is being supervised by Dr Thao Lê and Dr Paul Throssell.

**Purpose of the study:** Based on the increasing awareness of intercultural communication in tertiary education in Australia, this study investigates the perceptions of students as well as academic staff members of the significance of intercultural awareness in foreign language teaching and learning in an Australian university context. The investigator will use questionnaires with participants to examine their perceptions towards the significance of intercultural awareness in foreign language teaching and learning at the University of Tasmania. Participants will also be invited to semi-structured interviews, which will help investigate ways/approaches to deal with intercultural awareness in Australian universities.

As with all involvement in research studies, your participation in the study is voluntary. If you decide to participate and subsequently withdraw, you can do so, without any penalty or prejudice, and may choose to withdraw any data you have supplied.

If you agree to participate in the study, you will be requested to spend approximately 8-10 minutes to complete the questionnaire. An addressed envelope will be provided for return of the questionnaire. Also this questionnaire

will be available online (Qualtrics survey software) in an electronic version for the teaching staff and students who would be interested in doing this questionnaire online. In addition, a box will be placed in the office of the Faculty of Education for those who choose this method to return the questionnaire. The researcher will also return in the following week to collect the questionnaires.

Please note that the questionnaire does not request any identifying questions or items and all information will be not identifiable and individual identity will remain confidential. It follows that in any research output, your contribution will not be identifiable to you. The completed questionnaires will be kept locked in Dr Le's office and will be shredded after five years. For electronic data, all the folders and files will be securely deleted after a period of five years.

Your completion and submission of this Questionnaire indicates your consent for participating in this research study.

If you would like to discuss any aspect of this study please feel free to contact either Dr Thao Le at [Thao.Le@utas.edu.au](mailto:Thao.Le@utas.edu.au) or Yanjun Wang at [Yanjun.Wang@utas.edu.au](mailto:Yanjun.Wang@utas.edu.au). Either of us would be happy to discuss any aspect of the research with you.

The Human Research Ethics Committee (Tasmania) Network has approved this study (Reference number: H11274). If you have any concerns about the manner in which the project is conducted, you may contact the Executive Officer of the Human Research ethics committee (Tasmania) who can be contacted on (03) 6226 7479 or [human.ethics@utas.edu.au](mailto:human.ethics@utas.edu.au).

More information on the study can be obtained from the chief investigator Dr. Thao Lê, phone (03) 6324 3696, or the PhD student Yanjun Wang, phone (03) 6324 3046 Thank you for taking the time to consider this study and we look forward to your reply.

Yours sincerely



Dr. Thao Lê

Yanjun Wang

## **Appendix I – Information sheet for interview**

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Tasmania 7250 Australia  
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Email: [Thao.Le@utas.edu.au](mailto:Thao.Le@utas.edu.au); [Yanjun.Wang@utas.edu.au](mailto:Yanjun.Wang@utas.edu.au)  
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## Faculty of Education - University of Tasmania

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### Information Sheet for INTERVIEW

(FOR STAFF AND STUDENTS)

*Title: Views and attitudes of staff and students members towards the significance of intercultural awareness in foreign language teaching and learning in an Australian university context*

**Invitation:** You are invited to participate in a research study into views and attitudes of staff and students members towards the significance of intercultural awareness in foreign language teaching and learning at the University of Tasmania. The study is being undertaken by the chief investigator, Dr. Thao Lê, and Yanjun Wang who is a PhD student at the University of Tasmania. Yanjun Wang is being supervised by Dr Thao Lê and Dr Paul Throssell.

**Purpose of the study:** Based on the increasing awareness of intercultural communication in tertiary education in Australia, this study investigates the perceptions of students as well as academic staff members of the significance of intercultural awareness in foreign language teaching and learning in an Australian university context. The investigator will use questionnaires with participants to examine their perceptions towards the significance of intercultural awareness in foreign language teaching and learning at the University of Tasmania. Participants will also be invited to semi-structured interviews, which will help investigate ways/approaches to deal with intercultural awareness in Australian universities.

As with all involvement in research studies, your participation in the study is voluntary, and is evidenced by signing a consent form. If you decide to participate and subsequently withdraw, you can do so, without any penalty or prejudice, and may choose to withdraw any data you have supplied.

If you agree to participate in the study, you will be requested to spend about 30 minutes in an individual face-to-face interview with Yanjun Wang. The interview will be audio-recorded to aid in accurate transcription of the information for data

analysis. Copies of the transcription of the interview may be supplied to you upon request, and you may, if you wish, edit or modify what you earlier contributed. You will be provided with a guide to the types of questions you will be asked prior to the interview.

Although the researcher will know your identity, you will not be identifiable in any research output. Once the study is completed, the audio files and transcripts will be stored in a secure locked cabinet at the University for five years, and will then be shredded.

If you would like to discuss any aspect of this study please feel free to contact either Dr Thao Le at [Thao.Le@utas.edu.au](mailto:Thao.Le@utas.edu.au) or Yanjun Wang at [Yanjun.Wang@utas.edu.au](mailto:Yanjun.Wang@utas.edu.au). Either of us would be happy to discuss any aspect of the research with you.

The Human Research Ethics Committee (Tasmania) Network has approved this study (Reference number: H11274). If you have any concerns about the manner in which the project is conducted, you may contact the Executive Officer of the Human Research ethics committee (Tasmania) who can be contacted on (03) 6226 7479 or [human.ethics@utas.edu.au](mailto:human.ethics@utas.edu.au).

If you are happy to take part in this study, please sign the consent form, place it in the pre-addressed envelope and mail it back to the chief investigator Dr. Thao Lê or the PhD student Yanjun Wang.

More information on the study can be obtained from the chief investigator Dr. Thao Lê, phone (03) 6324 3696, or the PhD student Yanjun Wang, phone (03) 6324 3046 Thank you for taking the time to consider this study and we look forward to your reply.

Yours sincerely



Dr. Thao Lê

Yanjun Wang

## **Appendix J – Consent form**

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Website: [www.utas.edu.au/educ](http://www.utas.edu.au/educ)



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## Faculty of Education - University of Tasmania

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### CONSENT FORM

*Title of Project:* Views and attitudes of staff and students members towards the significance of intercultural awareness in foreign language teaching and learning in an Australian university context

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1. I have read and understood the 'Information Sheet' for this project.
2. The nature and possible effects of the study have been explained to me.
3. I understand that the study involves participation in an audio-recorded interview to give my views and attitudes of the significance of intercultural awareness in foreign language teaching and learning, which will take approximately 30 minutes. I understand that I am entitled to a copy of the transcript of my interview if I wish, so that I can verify or modify its content.
4. I understand that the following risks are involved - there are no foreseeable risks involved for participants in this study.
5. I understand that all research data will be securely stored on the University of Tasmania premises for at least five years, and will be destroyed when no longer required.
6. Any questions that I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction.
7. I agree that research data gathered from me for the study may be published provided that I cannot be identified as a participant.
8. I understand that the researchers will maintain my identity confidential and that any information I supply to the researcher(s) will be used only for the purposes of the research.
9. I agree to participate in this investigation and understand that I may withdraw at any time without any effect, and if I so wish, may request that any data I have supplied to date be withdrawn from the research.

Name of Participant:

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Signature:

Date:

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**Statement by Investigator**

- I have explained the project & the implications of participation in it to this volunteer and I believe that the consent is informed and that he/she understands the implications of participation.

If the Investigator has not had an opportunity to talk to participants prior to them participating, the following must be ticked.

- The participant has received the Information Sheet where my details have been provided so participants have the opportunity to contact me prior to consenting to participate in this project.

## **Appendix K – Coding procedure from NVivo**

Nodes

Name	Sources	References
experiences relating to intercultural awareness	20	114
personal experiences	18	40
challenging experiences	9	19
negative experiences	15	25
positive experiences	12	28
professional experiences	20	109
challenging experiences	17	35
negative experiences	15	25
positive experiences	17	41
facets of intercultural awareness	19	45
adjustments made to integrate intercultural awareness	15	27
attitudinal changes	5	7
attitudinal consistency	5	5
influential experiences	8	18
interpretation of intercultural awareness	20	110
acculturation	6	9
cultural background and upbringing	3	3
social and cultural challenges of inclusion	5	7
social exclusion	4	12
social inclusion	19	40
conceptualisation of intercultural awareness	18	28
personal understandings of intercultural awareness	18	44
significance of intercultural awareness	20	113
language empowerment	20	90
linguistic inadequacy	19	43
linguistic proficiency	11	16
neutral	3	3
satisfactory	5	8
unsatisfactory	4	10
linguistic relativity	19	37
high relevance	5	7
low relevance	1	2
medium relevance	4	12
strategies to enhance cultural sensitivity	20	98
current adopting approaches	11	50
evaluation of integration	20	56
neutral	3	3
satisfactory	5	8
unsatisfactory	4	10

## Nodes

Name	Sources	References
<input type="radio"/> future suggestions	15	34
<input type="radio"/> students' expectations	5	10
<input type="radio"/> teaching staff's expectations	9	14