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Children Encountering Each Other Through Storytelling:
Promoting Intercultural Learning in Schools

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Abstract

Schools need concrete pedagogical tools to promote intercultural learning. The Storycrafting method is used to promote interactions between children that lead to a dynamic, rather than static, experience of culture. Children (aged 9–11) exchanged stories told using the Storycrafting method with another class in Finland, Scotland or an international school in Europe. To understand how children experience the intercultural encounters, the children’s stories and other ethnographic materials are analyzed and frames are developed. These frames are telling to entertain, telling to challenge, telling from real-life experiences, telling from shared experience, responding sensitively and responding defensively. Approaching intercultural learning through Storycrafting creates a shared narrative culture and avoids stereotyping the Other, which is a common limitation in intercultural exchange projects.

*Keywords*: intercultural exchange; dynamic culture; narrative research; design-based research; child perspective
Children Encountering Each Other Through Storytelling: Promoting Intercultural Learning in Schools

Our aim is to continue developing the theory of children’s intercultural encounters. *Intercultural competence*, “the ability to effectively and appropriately interact in an intercultural situation or context” (Perry & Southwell, 2011, 453) is more commonly used in the research, but we use the term *intercultural encounters* purposefully to draw attention to the process of encountering instead of measuring an innate ability. We ask the following research question: How do children encounter each other in an intercultural Storycrafting exchange? We used the Storycrafting method (Karlsson, 2013) in an intercultural exchange between classrooms to create a participatory space for the encounters.

Intercultural learning is central to both national curricula and international school systems, such as the International Baccalaureate (e.g. Barratt Hacking et al., 2017; Goren & Yemini, 2017; Hill, 2006). However, according to Plotkin (2013), many schools struggle to get beyond holding international festivals which reinforce the static aspects of culture, such as flags, costumes and food. Dervin and Machart (2016) lament that many models of intercultural competence tend to “overemphasize national/cultural difference, [and] ignore the importance of interaction in the construction of the ‘intercultural’” (p. ii). Intercultural pedagogies should go beyond describing the similarities and differences of cultures, instead focusing on interaction, which makes *intercultural* the preferred term over *trans-cultural* (focusing on universal values) or *multicultural* (focusing on respecting diversity) (Portera, 2008).

Previous research has already theorized and categorised intercultural education in many ways (Goren & Yemini, 2017), so we will clarify our position in the field. We aim to understand intercultural learning as it happens in the elementary school classroom through a paradigm of pragmatism. According to Dewey’s pragmatism, knowledge forms in a
transactional space, where the subject is in on-going interaction with the world (Dewey, 1940; Dewey & Bentley, 1946). Pragmatism approaches inquiry holistically and heeds that social, emotional, contextual and historical factors influence the learning process (Morgan, 2014). Contextual factors include space, time, materiality and nature. A holistic approach enables us to thoroughly investigate the complex interactions happening in a school classroom (Chan, 2010). Capturing the dynamic, multi-layered nature of culture requires going beyond learning about cultures to learning through intercultural encounters. We would also like to suggest that the learning is more meaningful when it is based on reciprocal encounters.

Intercultural learning opportunities are not equally available to different population groups (Goren & Yemini, 2017). Making intercultural learning opportunities accessible to all learners – whether they attend a national or international school, or whether they belong to a minority or majority group – promotes ethical agendas such as peace education and social justice (Gorski, 2009). In the words of Räsänen (2007, 24): “It is often the majority that needs attitude change and awareness-raising the most because they are seldom forced to encounter their difference or to evaluate their assumptions.” In practice, intercultural exchange projects tend to privilege socio-economic groups which have opportunities to travel (Goren & Yemini, 2017). By contrast, the Storycrafting exchange which this article describes is accessible to all socio-economic groups because it is low cost, low risk and does not require extensive training or skills from the children in order to be implemented in a classroom.

This article also addresses some of the problems in the current research on intercultural learning. Traditional theories of intercultural learning are based on adult learners and tend to emphasize the role or critical reflection (Bennett, 1998; Byram, 1997; Deardorff, 2006; Perry & Southwell, 2011; Taylor, 1994). There is little research that describes how elementary school children typically learn the knowledge, skills and attitudes that are related
to intercultural learning (Goren & Yemini, 2017), but it seems reasonable to assume that a child’s developmental stage will influence the process of learning (Byram, 1997). More commonly studies involve middle school students, who take part in some form of an intercultural exchange (Dodd, 2001; Goren & Yemini, 2017; Lau, 2015; Mackenzie, Enslin & Hedge, 2016; Morgan, 2001). Often the learning in these teacher-led exchanges remains at a superficial level and can even reinforce stereotypes; however, developing positive interpersonal connections with exchange partners can enhance intercultural attitudes, because the encounters feel meaningful (Walton, Priest & Paradies, 2013). To better understand how children engage meaningfully in intercultural encounters, we have approached this study valuing the child perspective (Karlsson & Riihela, 2012) and seeing the participating children (aged 9–11 years) as knowledgeable partners. Research shows that young children value participatory classrooms, but too often teachers do not notice situations where children could make decisions (Correia & Aguiar, 2017). We chose the participatory Storycrafting method for this study so that the children would be able to steer the encounters and that the encounters would feel meaningful to them, rather than a non-participatory, teacher-led task. By the end of this article, we will attempt to describe the children’s experience through the theoretical concept of a reciprocal intercultural encounter.

**The Theory of Intercultural Encounters**

This section will first review existing research on intercultural exchange in schools, then discuss the central concepts of this article. To understand an intercultural encounter, culture should be understood as a dynamic concept rather than a static concept (Erez & Gati, 2004). Bruner’s (1986;1991) narrative mode of knowing explains how this dynamism can be understood through stories. The final section looks at encountering and dialogue (Buber, 2002/1947; Karlsson, 2000), and Goffman’s (1974) frame analysis, which explains how children interpret intercultural encounters.
Intercultural Exchange in the Related Literature

Commonly, schools foster intercultural learning through exchange projects, where two groups of students based in different countries exchange materials, such as letters. This approach has received mixed reviews in the related research, often due to the danger of unintentionally reinforcing stereotypes (Perry & Southwell, 2011; Theodorou, 2011; Walton, Priest & Paradies, 2013). Lau (2015) writes about a letter exchange between a Canadian class and Burmese children who were refugees. Mostly, the Canadian children focused on the exotic and found it difficult to overcome their stereotypical ideas of refugees. Mackenzie, Enslin and Hedge (2016, 128) studied Scottish young people’s perceptions of being “a good global neighbor” by connecting them with schools in Malawi. Although the students demonstrated respect and caring in their responses, they had a superficial understanding of the lives of their Malawian counterparts, who were seen as objects in need of charity (Mackenzie, Enslin & Hedge, 2016). In these kinds of cultural exchange projects, the exchange partner typically remains a distant Other and it is difficult to gain a dynamic cultural understanding from the exchanged materials.

Jaatinen (2015) studied the pedagogy of encountering in two English as a foreign language classrooms in Finland. There were no exchange partners involved, but collaborative situations created a space for intercultural encountering between students. Culture was understood in an experiential sense as everyday life patterns, and students started to learn about different perspectives when they were given opportunities to reflect on their own identity (Jaatinen, 2015). Intercultural understanding requires learners to become self-aware of their cultural identities and practices (Abdallah-Pretceille, 2006). To do this, Jaatinen (2015) recommends using narrative and dialogue in curricular planning, because children found telling and listening to each other’s stories meaningful, increasing their awareness of themselves and others.
To summarize, a traditional exchange project between schools tends to focus on comparing one culture to another as two static entities, whereas an intercultural encounter is concerned with the quality of the interaction between the participants. The following sections will present a theoretical model of an intercultural encounter by examining culture as a dynamic concept and looking at an encounter through theories of dialogue and interaction.

Defining Dynamic Culture

The term culture in its various everyday and research contexts is used in so many ways (Jahoda, 2012) that finding a clear and focused definition is imperative. Culture can be understood in the everyday meanings as a set of social norms or as, for example, traditional handicrafts, cooking or festivals. However, in research it can be counterproductive and even harmful to define culture in a static way as a “thing” (Alvaré, 2017, 34). A static definition views culture as stable, unchanging and uniform, leading to stereotypical understandings of groups of people. Alvaré (2017) describes a research project where American researchers unintentionally essentialized the culture of Trinidadian teachers due to the researchers’ static understanding of culture. Had they viewed culture as dynamic instead, they could have shifted from pedagogies of knowledge (teaching about cultures) to pedagogies of encountering (learning through intercultural encounters) (Kaikkonen, 2004).

In recent years, there has been a growing body of research which looks at culture from a dynamic perspective: Shepherd (2014) and Kaufman (2004) approach culture as a “process”; Dervin (2011) has a “liquid approach” to culture; and Portera (2008) associates intercultural education with a dynamic understanding of culture. Abdallah-Pretceille (2006) criticizes the term culture for being too static and objectifying, and instead prefers the term “culturality,” which communicates the concept’s changing and fragmented nature. From the pragmatic perspective, cultural practices do not exist in “hypothetical cultural realities” (Abdallah-Pretceille, 2006, 480) but rather are created in the interaction between person and
environment. Erez and Gati (2004) describe a dynamic model of culture which is based on a nested cultural ecology and incorporates cultural change processes. In their model, culture spans multiple levels (individual, group, organizational, national, or global) and changes over time through bottom-up and top-down processes (see Figure 1). Culture exists as “a shared meaning system” (Erez & Gati, 2004, 587) on each of these levels and the change process happens as a result of interactions between levels, which is what makes the model dynamic. We would like to also suggest that interactions can exist within levels.

When viewed as dynamic, it becomes difficult to make a stable claim about a culture or even an individual’s cultural self-representation. Individuals’ actions in the shared transactional space either work to maintain or alter culture over time. Abdallah-Pretceille (2006, 476) warns against “reducing the individual to his/her cultural membership” for fear of confusing what is unique personality and what is cultural background. How, then, can we know about culture without losing this dynamic understanding?

**Accessing Dynamic Culture Through Narratives**

Instead of seeing culture as a stable entity, culture is defined as a process that continuously shapes shared meaning systems through interactions. In particular, the human brain easily processes interactions that take a narrative form (Haven, 2007). *Narrative* is a broad concept made up of all the small stories people tell themselves in their everyday lives and the grand stories of literature, media and cultural traditions (Bamberg, 2006; Georgakapoulou, 2007). In his seminal work, Bruner (1986, 1991) makes a distinction between narrative and logical-scientific modes of knowing. In the logical-scientific mode reality is objectively knowable, whereas in the narrative mode, reality is constructed and
experienced through narratives. In a successful intercultural encounter, the participants tap into their narrative mode of knowing as they interact through narratives.

There are many reasons why working with narratives is a good way to approach intercultural learning. Firstly, narratives maintain the complex and holistic nature of culture (Chan, 2010). Narratives are malleable and can reflect different cultural perspectives (Bruner, 1991). Furthermore, in the words of Bruner (1991, 18), “narratives accrue to create […] a culture, a history or […] a tradition.” Sharing knowledge in narrative form makes it accessible to different audiences, including young children (Puroila, Estola & Syrjälä, 2012). Lastly, the nature of both telling and listening is dynamic and process based.

It is rare in research practice that children can tell any story they want (Karlsson, 2013). Furthermore, young children are often seen as not yet competent in using narrative conventions; this despite the fact that children constantly make sense of the world and their experiences through stories (Puroila, 2013). The Storycrafting method, where children freely tell a story to an interested scribe, allows children to tell about things that are important and meaningful to them (Karlsson, 2014). It has been used for listening to children’s voices because it reduces power differences between teller and scribe, and focuses on openness, active listening and building trust between the participants (Karlsson, 2013). The Storycrafting method is therefore well suited to promoting intercultural encounters that emphasize the narrative mode of knowing. Additionally, Storycrafting has already been used in global education projects to connect children in different countries (Karlsson, Levamo & Siukonen, 2014).

Narratives are influenced by the context in which they are created (Bruner, 1991). For this reason, Puroila, Estola and Syrjälä (2012, 192) claim that “the context and the process of producing the story” are part of the definition of a narrative. Allowing children to tell open-ended narratives in an institutional setting, such as a school, sheds light on power relations
when children choose to challenge authority through, for example, themes of horror, violence or toilet humor (Hohti, 2016). As a result, adults who begin using the Storycrafting method often realize they had not been giving enough space for the children to express themselves in a way that is natural to them (Karlsson, 2014). Storycrafting, therefore, helps educators to move from an authoritative classroom environment to a more participatory classroom environment.

Towards Encountering

In his philosophy of dialogue, Buber (2002/1947) uses the concept of an encounter to mean dialogical situations where a person fully strives to understand another’s point of view. This is in contrast to seeing the Other as merely the content of one’s experience. Buber calls the first an I–Thou relationship and the second an I–It relationship. Buber’s meaning of encounter coincides well with what we have in mind when we define a reciprocal intercultural encounter. Karlsson (2000) adds a We relationship orientation to Buber’s (2002/1947) classification to explain encounters which are constructed jointly in a specific, context-bound interaction. A We relationship involves fully including its participants, in contrast to an I–It relationship, where the object is viewed as an Other.

Although much research into intercultural education has good intentions, power relations can prevent dialogical situations from becoming encounters. Three kinds of discourse have been identified: conservative discourses which view minorities as culturally different Others who need to be assimilated into the majority norms; liberal discourses which focus on acknowledging and appreciating diversity, but fail to tackle hegemonic power relations; critical discourses which address the problem of Othering by viewing culture as fluid and focus on education for social justice (Gorski, 2009; Hummelstedt-Djedou, Zilliacus & Holm, 2018; Jenks, Lee & Kanpol, 2001). Critical versions of intercultural education disapprove of the fact that the “majority children generally appear to have no ethnicity and
represent the normal, whereas the (multi)ethnic children stand out as the Other” (Mikander, Zilliacus & Holm, 2018, 47). In an intercultural exchange, seeing the partner class as the Other creates an I–It relationship (Buber, 2002/1947), where the Other becomes an object of intrigue but not a mutual partner. We argue that education that promotes successful intercultural encounters enables the participants to meet as equals and engage in an I–Thou relationship of mutual dialogue. The philosophy behind the Storycrafting method develops a space which is conducive to intercultural encountering. It promotes active listening and a non-judgmental atmosphere (Karlsson, 2014).

Goffman’s (1974, 8) frame analysis provides a useful theoretical framework to explain “What is it that’s going on here?” from the children’s perspectives (Puroila, 2002). According to Goffman (1974), we project our current system of beliefs onto a situation, which leads us to make interpretations through a situational frame. Contextual factors influence how we select a frame. For example, in the context of a school classroom, students will raise their hands prior to speaking, because they are aware of social frameworks that dictate behaviors in that space. Social frameworks provide a backbone of societal norms, which can be followed or willfully opposed (Goffman, 1974). The way a situation is interpreted is also influenced by social queues, which Goffman calls a lamination. For example, action can be patterned on a recognizable activity (e.g. a real argument), but it is understood by the participants or observers as something else (acting out an argument in a play). Goffman (1974) calls this process of interpretation keying (like moving up or down a key in music).

When children engage in telling stories to an exchange partner, their choices will be influenced by their interpretations of the situational frames. For example, laminations explain why children may kill off a character in their story: they understand that the story is not real, and that the events happen in a story world (a lamination), so the death of a character is not
interpreted in the same way as a death in real life. In this way, frame analysis helps to interpret the complexity in social situations, shedding light on culture as dynamic, changing and context-bound. The next sections will describe children’s intercultural encounters by identifying the frames the children use to interact with each other.

**Method**

A design-based research (DBR) approach was used to develop classroom practice that promotes intercultural encounters. This section will discuss the project methodology, data collection and analysis methods.

**Design-Based Research**

This DBR project took place in the classrooms of the first author. DBR developed out of the need to apply educational research meaningfully in schools (Brown, 1992; Sandoval & Bell, 2004). Instruction is designed with theory in mind, and incidents drive the development of theory. The aim of DBR is to develop practical interventions that can be sustained in the classroom even after the researcher exits the scene (Anderson & Shattuck, 2012). DBR typically includes multiple iterations of the project, where new data are used to make improvements to the next cycle. DBR is often a collaboration between a researcher and a teacher (Anderson & Shattuck, 2012). In this case the researcher was also the teacher, and the goal was to bring educational theory into teaching practice and to generate new theoretical knowledge based on a practical intervention.

**Ethics**

The guidelines from the Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity (2012) were followed to ensure this research conforms to ethical standards. Informed consent was obtained from the participant children, their parents, the teachers, the head teachers of the schools and the local education authority, where appropriate. It was made clear to the
participants and their parents that they could freely withdraw from the study at any point. All data were anonymized by coding the participants’ names and removing any information which would make them identifiable. As the research participants were mostly children, special care was taken to ensure their dignity and freedom from harm during all stages of the research process. This meant the researchers were sensitive and actively listened to the participants during the data production and analysis stages.

**Research Data Production**

The data were produced over two cycles of classroom-based research with children aged 9–11 years. Between March and May 2015, a seven-week Storycrafting exchange took place between an elementary class in Scotland and two elementary classes in Finland from different schools. All three schools were located in predominantly rural areas. The second cycle took place the following school year, from January to May in 2016, between one of the same schools in Finland and a private international school in Europe where three classes participated together as a team-teaching project. All the children were new to the project in the second cycle, but two of the same teachers continued. These particular classes were selected because all the teachers in question were knowledgeable about the Storycrafting method and motivated to pursue the exchange.

The children told stories either individually, in small groups or as a class. Table 1 shows the participant classes and the types of stories produced.

[Table 1]

Although this intercultural exchange is also an international exchange, the participants are not defined predominantly by their nationalities, but rather by their belonging to two separate cultural groups (e.g. a school, a nationality, heavy metal music fandom, a swimming team, a language group, etc.) within a nested model of culture (Erez & Gati,
2004). We argue, therefore, that it would be feasible to conduct an intercultural exchange between any two schools as each institution has its own unique organizational culture. On the smallest level, an exchange could also be *intracultural*: within one group of children.

The Storycrafting instruction (Karlsson, 2013) was given in the following form:

Tell me a story, any story you want. I will write it down exactly as you say it.

When it is finished, I will read it back to you and you can make changes or corrections.

The instruction in Storycrafting is deliberately open-ended in order to create a participatory space where children’s voices, rather than adult voices, are heard and appreciated. The “culture” in this intercultural exchange is not defined as a static thing, but instead experienced as a process where a new, shared, narrative culture is created by the participants.

Initially the teachers scribed the stories to model how to listen actively to the storyteller and to develop a class culture of participation. Later students also participated in scribing, so that they could practice active listening. Working in pairs or threes allowed students more opportunities to tell their own stories compared to a whole-class story where they had to take turns. Having a smaller, more intimate audience for these stories may have encouraged the children to tell more personal stories. The stories were sent by email to the partner class, where they were read in translation and then in the original language (English or Finnish). The stories were translated both ways by a teacher who is a native speaker in both languages. During the first cycle, the story was followed by an open-ended class discussion in response to the question, “What would you like to say about this story?” The teacher directed the discussion by allocating turns and answering impromptu questions about the Finnish exchange partners (e.g. “What’s in their classrooms?”). The discussions were audio-recorded in the teacher-researcher’s class (1A). In Class 1B, the teacher also audio-
recorded the individual responses of students. The fact that the teacher led the discussion seemed to guide the children towards evaluating their peers’ stories like in a typical language lesson. However, the Storycrafting method advocates that a story should not be assessed but celebrated (Karlsson, 2014). To move the children’s responses away from evaluation and towards appreciation in the second cycle, they were asked to draw a picture of the story they heard instead of verbally commenting.

Additionally, the teacher-researcher of Classes 1A and 2A kept a researcher diary and observation notes on the Storycrafting sessions. Informed consent was sought in order to include the email exchange between the participating teachers as research data. The children’s stories were the main data collected to study the exchange, but triangulation occurred by including data about the perspectives of the teachers (emails, observation notes, researcher diary) and the children’s responses to the partners’ stories (class discussions, drawings). The triangulation of the data ensures a holistic and detailed account of the project, so that we could study the encounters that happened within and between the groups. A summary of the research data is presented in Table 2. As the focus of this article is on the encounters and not the content of the stories, the children’s drawings were excluded from the analysis and will be used in future research.

[Table 2]

The impact of the dual teacher-researcher role was recognized and addressed in several ways. The teacher-researcher was in a position of power in relation to the students in her class and had to practice reflexivity during the empirical sessions to promote a participatory environment (Xerri, 2018). However, she also knew the children in her class and had had a longer time to develop a relationship of trust with the group. The Storycrafting method was used because it reduces power differences between teller and scribe and creates an atmosphere where different voices are heard and valued (Karlsson, 2014). At the
beginning of each exchange, the teacher-researcher asked the children to participate in
deciding shared expectations for Storycrafting (e.g. when telling a group story, one group
wanted to alternate between boys and girls as the storyteller). The teacher-researcher was also
a participant of the Storycrafting exchange, modeling how to listen to a teller and reminding
the children regularly that the power to decide what happens next in a story rests with the
teller. The teacher-researcher abstained from directing or evaluating the content of the stories
in any way, and always let the teller decide when a story was finished. If class time ran out,
the story would be continued the following session. Children were given opportunities to read
aloud their finished stories to their class in order to show their voices were valued. The
teacher-researcher’s role was very important to the success of the exchange, because her
approach created spaces where children could deviate from typical classroom power
structures and create a new cultural space.

**The Analysis Method**

Narrative research holds that 1) stories are not neutral containers of knowledge but
objects which can be examined and interpreted, and 2) they should be analyzed using a
holistic strategy, taking into account the context of telling (Spector-Mersel, 2010). Kinnunen
and Puroila (2016) use the “searching presence” (see Olkkonen & Turpeinen, 2010) to move
back and forth between the details of the data and the holistic view of the whole research
process. This was a suitable strategy for our data set as well, because it allowed us to identify
the latent content, “distant from the text but still close to the participants’ lived experiences”
(Graneheim, Lindgren & Lundman, 2017, 30). Like Kinnunen and Puroila (2016, 240), we
were interested in “how the space of children’s narration was shaped by diverse relationships,
such as the children’s peer relationships, the child–researcher relationships and the children’s
relationships with the cultural and material environment.”
All the data were analyzed using a holistic approach as they are intertwined with the context in which they were created. Braun and Clarke’s (2006) thematic analysis method provided a backbone for the process. Initially, the first author read through all the data items (stories, emails, transcribed class discussions, researcher diary entries) and assigned preliminary inductive codes to each. The codes are based on the content (e.g. pets), form (e.g. exaggeration) and context (e.g. listening actively) of the storytelling in order to provide a holistic view of the Storycrafting sessions. Initial themes were created by grouping similar codes together.

In the next phase, the first author read through all the data again and created a table of codes and related data extracts. Some initial codes were discarded and new ones were formed that better described the data. Then the initial themes were reviewed from the perspective of Goffman’s (1974) frame analysis, bearing in mind the research question, “How do children encounter each other in an intercultural Storycrafting exchange?” The themes were developed further and renamed frames, which answer Goffman’s (1974, 8) question, “What is it that is going on here?” The frames explain how children interpreted the encounters they experienced during the Storycrafting sessions. Two themes (narrative conventions and contextual influences) and seven codes that did not answer the research question were discarded. Three pairs of frames were developed in the analysis process: telling to entertain and telling to challenge; telling from real-life experiences and telling from shared experience; responding sensitively and responding defensively. After this process was completed by the first author, the second author independently reviewed the codes to check for intercoder reliability. Then the authors discussed and reworked the coding of the data over several rounds of reflection to ensure the analysis described the data as accurately and holistically as possible.
Findings

The participating children framed the experience of participating in an intercultural Storycrafting exchange in six ways, which have been organized into three closely related pairs. Telling a story could be oriented towards getting a reaction from the partner class or one’s own class (telling to entertain, telling to challenge). The second pair of frames focuses on reaffirming identity within oneself (telling from real-life experiences) or within a group (telling from shared experience). The third pair characterizes the children’s responses after hearing a story from the partner class: the responses were either sensitive (when the children strived to take the perspective of their exchange partners) or defensive (when they focused on superficial features of the partner class’s story and used discourses of Othering) (Buber, 2002/1947; Hummelstedt-Djedou, Zilliacus & Holm, 2018). The findings of this article are summarized in Table 3. This paper seeks to highlight the child perspective in the findings, so extracts from the data have been quoted as much as possible to bring the children’s voices to the fore.

[Table 3]

Telling to Entertain

The following incident was recorded in the researcher diary: “At the very end, Sophie was the last teller left. Before beginning, she said, ‘I want to make this really funny!’” It summarizes how the children framed many of the Storycrafting sessions: they intended them to be fun experiences, and here the teller planned to take pleasure in inciting laughter in her audience. It seems that one of the ways that the children reach out to the partner class is by entertaining them through humor. Simultaneously, they reinforce the sense of belonging with their peers.
Children’s humor seems different from adult humor, as a participant teacher explains: “surprising and funny [parts] tend to be surprising and funny for all the children. [They] laugh in unison during parts that I don’t find funny, and when I would laugh, they listen calmly.” When the Storycrafting situations are framed as telling to entertain, the atmosphere in the classroom becomes lively, particularly if the teller has a large audience.

Children create humor using playful language: exaggeration, repetition, metamorphosis, imaginative character names and absurd situations. This extract displays most of these elements:

Everyone gets eaten by a big, fat, humongous, obese, swag, ugly, scary, big-teethed mammoth called Jeff Henry Jake Jaffa Cake Jamie Hetty Betty Plonker Stevo, and Beanz and Ziggy turned into a submarine and floated away. (Extract from a class story, Scotland)

The characters in humorous stories also tend to be clumsy and clownish: “Australia walked to Jamaica, then fell over onto his face and when he stood up a bird pooed in his face” (Brody, Scotland). One participating teacher noted that the first stories of the exchange tended to be about these clownish characters, perhaps because the stories were sent to an unfamiliar audience. Some children’s humorous stories use scatological (toilet) humor, which is a way into taboo subjects: “Humor [has] a tendency to turn the established order upside down and reveal what is normally hidden and not spoken about” (Van der Geest, 2016, 127–128). In these ways, telling to entertain provides an invitation to classmates and exchange partners to join in a shared situation of making fun.

**Telling to Challenge**

Storycrafting provides a space for children to verbalize topics which usually are viewed as taboo or inappropriate in school. There are 119 extracts in the data where the
children are telling to challenge. Death, violence, destruction, illness, injury, drunkenness, sexualized word choices and excrement featured in these types of stories. When these stories are told, the atmosphere in the classroom becomes tense; there is nervous giggling, the children focus intensely and clearly know the story is crossing some boundaries, as illustrated in this extract:

Beanz and Ziggy went to cat school, but they were too cool for school so they wanted to cause trouble. So they ran up to the Head Teacher’s office and picked up the Head Teacher and swung him around until he fainted. They put him in the cupboard upside down. They fed him cake until he was sick. He died of horrible sickness. (Extract from a class story, Scotland)

“Is this story really going to Finland?” one child asked incredulously when the character of the Head Teacher died. This story is particularly contrary because it challenges the power of the school’s highest authority figure.

The initial stories in an exchange were sent as challenges to a partner class full of strangers. A participant teacher explained in an email: “Stories sent to strangers might have more anti-heroes – i.e. a big, silly character doing silly things – and unfortunate, embarrassing endings.” There was an element of competition: who can tell the boldest story? A breach in the norms adds to the story’s tellability (Bruner, 1991). Often a story that challenged social conventions received a response story that did the same. Although the children used taboo topics in these stories, their purpose was not to be disparaging towards others. Actually, these challenge stories were used to connect with peers, both in the partner class and their own. The children participate in a kind of game, where the rules are implicitly understood by most involved, creating a reciprocal relationship.
**Telling From Real-Life Experiences**

In 165 extracts of the data, the participating children framed the Storycrafting session as an opportunity to tell from real-life experiences, making it the most common frame. The focus was not on the audience, but on making visible things that matter to the teller.

In many cases, the Storycrafting situation reflects an I–It relationship since the focus is on reaching in rather than reaching out towards another (Buber, 2002/1947). Some children wanted to format their story with interesting fonts so that not only the oral, but also the visual form of the story reflected the teller’s preferences. These stories can be interpreted as a form of cultural self-representation, the smallest unit of culture as depicted in the dynamic, nested model of culture described by Erez and Gati (2004). The *telling from real-life experiences* frame is present in many stories as it can be argued that cultural self-representation is in ongoing interaction with the group level of culture.

Telling stories is a way for children to either reproduce or break cultural conventions (Bruner, 1991). Telling a story that affirms norms may, for example, explore the role of a parent:

Lenni’s mum called Lenni to come eat, but Lenni was too far away and he didn’t hear his mum’s voice. Lenni’s mum went after Lenni. Lenni went after a butterfly, and his mum followed Lenni. Finally Lenni turned around and ran into his mum because she was running so fast that she couldn’t stop so quickly. Then they went home to eat. (Julia, Finland)

Here the mother’s role is to be a carer. There is also an implied understanding that even if the child is disobedient, a mother will still care for her child. These are cultural understandings that have perhaps been learned at home from parents, but also from societal discourses, forming a strong cultural convention.
The stories in the *telling from real-life experiences* frame were often about everyday incidents (e.g. going to school, playing with friends, accidents) and were typically told to a person whom the teller trusts, such as a teacher or a friend. A teacher commented:

When the child knows the recipient, the story can tell in a calm manner about a small hero who does what he/she wants, plans, takes action, maybe finds friends, plays, acts, succeeds, and perhaps at the end returns home. (Teacher email, Finland)

The teacher believes that if a relationship of trust existed between the teller and scribe, the teller was more likely to engage in *telling from real-life experiences*. These stories are more realistic than fantastical, although they can often be about personified animal characters acting out a child’s everyday life. When moved out of context, the stories may appear ordinary and insignificant, but the contextual information recorded in the researcher diary and participant teachers’ emails shows that telling the story was important to the child. By listening actively and wholly to the teller, the scribe enables an I–Thou relationship (Buber 2002/1947) to form between the two.

**Telling From Shared Experience**

There were times where a pair or small group of friends told a story that was framed as *telling from shared experience*. Even though the stories were sent to a partner class, the intended audience was someone familiar. This was the rarest frame in the data, made up of 38 extracts.

One boy, Ilmari, told a story to his friend, Jaakko, who scribed the following story; since the teller has approved the following transcription, grammatical errors have been left unaltered to preserve the integrity of the oral account:
Jaakko and Ilmari

Once there was a boy named Jaakko and his friend Ilmari. They always went to the skating ramps. To cycle on the ramps then they are often in shops buying sweets and went to the climbing frames to eat sweets and doing tricks with their bikes in Jaakko’s yard and whenever Ilmari goes to Jaakko’s place then they play Lego Marvel and Minecraft and walk on the railings then they climb on the climbing frames and eat banana cake. (Finland)

The boys’ teacher explained in an email that the story is born out of the interaction between the two friends. It reaffirms their friendship by telling about their shared, enjoyable experiences. The story is constructed in a unique reciprocal encounter, creating a We relationship in that moment (Karlsson, 2000). Children often requested if they could alternate scribing and telling with a friend so that both could equally participate in telling and listening to the story. They took immense pride in these stories and afterwards talked about “our story.” Sometimes the same group of friends wanted to tell a sequel (or a few sequels) to the story. They had created a shared narrative culture.

Telling from shared experience includes feelings of mutuality and active listening. While one person tells, the rest of the class lives through every turn in the plot by laughing, gasping and shouting out suggestions. After a particularly happy and energetic Storycrafting session, one class wanted to name all the characters after themselves. Their sense of ownership was such that they literally put themselves into the story.

Responding Sensitively

Some extracts in the data show there are two ways that the children frame their responses to the partner class after hearing a story: sensitively or defensively. Sensitive responding is characterized by the children listening actively, engaging with the story,
showing curiosity, making connections to prior knowledge, trying to understand the foreign language, reciprocating the mood or themes in a story and taking the perspective of another. There is evidence of sensitive responding in both cycles of research, but it is more pronounced in the data from the second cycle due to adjustments to the method (see Methods section). A pedagogy of encountering (Jaatinen, 2015; Kaikkonen, 2004) promoted more sensitive responses from the children.

A positive example of showing curiosity for the partner class arose from the language of the stories. After hearing the story in translation and then in the original Finnish, Christy (from the Scottish class) asked the teacher to read the story again in Finnish, more slowly this time. “It sounds like more easy to understand, even though I can’t understand it at all,” she said afterwards. Hearing the stories in their original language was a good way for children to encounter foreignness, which diminished fear, suspicion and exoticism. The children in Finland had already learned some English at school, and some wrote comments in English on their drawings. This shows they were adjusting their language to be understood by the partner class.

A less explicit way in which the children responded sensitively was by reciprocating the mood or a theme from the partner class’s story in the response story. A story with an accident-prone, comical character would be reciprocated by another humorous story. A daring story with themes of explosions, violence and death led to a response story with the same elements, as exemplified in the extracts from two consecutive stories below:

Meanwhile Francesca drank this medical potion and got super powers that she could never die no matter what and she became the leader of the world. After a few seconds Francesca died and Tim actually came back to life, turned into Darth Vader and started killing everybody on the planet. Then the sun exploded and
killed the whole galaxy. (Extract from a class story, the international school in Europe)

The penguin blew up the bomber plane. It fell asleep on the road and a driver ran over it. Then the car’s driver blew up the car. Then the penguin exploded the entire universe. Finally the penguin went to find a freezer and left for Pingu Land. Then he played an exploding game with his friends. But then his entire country exploded. (Extract from a class story, Finland)

The children in Finland continued the theme of explosions and violence of the first story into the second. The atmosphere in the classroom becomes excited and tense, as described by the teacher:

Before starting, [the children] glanced at each other, as if to check if everyone was in on the same plot. When someone told a story highlight […] the next teller would open their mouth in the shape of an O and sit up straight, looking somehow pleased and excited, and start to think hard of their own response to this previously articulated “challenge.” (Teacher’s email, Finland)

In these instances, the two groups form a mutual understanding about the nature of the exchange in a We relationship (Karlsson, 2000). This is dynamic culture in action: the stories of one group begin to influence the stories of the other, and a new shared narrative culture is formed in the process (Erez & Gati, 2004).

**Responding Defensively**

There were also occasions when the children responded defensively rather than sensitively to the partner class’s stories, meaning that they were unwilling to take another’s
perspective, seeing their own cultural perspective as normative (Bennett, 1998). The final frame is informed by 41 extracts in the data, which are mostly out of the audio-recorded class discussions where the children commented on the stories. The school context and the teacher’s role in leading the discussion steered the way the children framed this situation, both in Finland and in Scotland (Hohti, 2016; Hohti & Karlsson, 2014). Typically, when a teacher asks children to comment on a piece of writing, the children’s responses are expected to be evaluative. So when asked to comment in Finland, several of the children said the story was “good.” In one case, it was “quite a confusing story.” In the class in Scotland, there were many mentions of “it was very short” or “it’s kinda repetitive.” This class mostly commented on the form of the story and only mentioned the content if there was a confusing part, like after hearing this story:

The Seed

Once upon a time, there was a girl who found a big seed on the ground. She planted it in a plant pot. One day it began to grow and the girl was very happy. The plant just kept on growing and growing, and it was now nearly reaching the roof. The girl began to wonder which plant’s seed it had been. The girl had to take the plant outside, so that it would have room to grow. Then she realized that it was a big tree. (Kirsi, Finland)

Neil commented: “Well, it didn’t really have a point to the story. All he [sic] did was picked up a seed, planted it, [it grew into] a tree and then planted it somewhere else outside.” In this story, there is no breach in conventions which would make the “point” of the story. The evaluative discourses used in the children’s comments led the Scottish class to make comparisons between themselves and the Finnish class, like “they’re gonna struggle,”
implying that they saw the Storycrafting as an academic writing activity and that they saw their own stories as superior.

Typical of the responding defensively frame was also an ethnocentric perspective – the children viewed their experience as normal and unfamiliar things as deviating from that norm. For example, one child in Scotland commented on how a story sounds in Finnish: “it sounds like it’s fast forward!” When the teacher explained that to Finnish children a story in English may also sound too fast to understand, the child retorted, “But we speak [...] normally.”

Discussion

This study addresses several gaps in the literature concerning children’s intercultural learning. The Storycrafting method offers an alternative approach to traditional intercultural exchange projects. As already discussed above, traditional exchange projects tend to be teacher-led, advance a static conceptualization of culture, direct students towards cultural comparison, and lead the students unintentionally to view the exchange partner as an Other (Alvaré, 2017; Walton, Priest & Paradies, 2013). A Storycrafting exchange, which creates reciprocal intercultural encounters, conceptualizes culture as a dynamic process rather than a static entity, there is a greater focus on developing mutual relationships, it is a participatory method, and the exchange happens within and between communities rather than individuals. Table 4 illustrates the salient differences between the traditional and reciprocal forms of intercultural exchange.

[Table 4]

Storycrafting promotes a form of intercultural learning which is community-oriented rather than residing only in the individual. The stories are created in an interactive space (Dewey, 1938; Karlsson, 2013) and this process of creation influences the way the children engage in the exchange. Figure 2 depicts the complexity of these interactions in a multi-
layered and dynamic cultural environment (Dewey, 1938; Erez & Gati, 2004). An exchange between two groups is not only intercultural, but simultaneously there are intracultural encounters occurring within the groups. The combined effect of these complex encounters produced a shared, dynamic, narrative culture between all the participants of the Storycrafting exchange.

[Figure 2]

Overall, the children framed the majority of Storycrafting situations in ways that promote encountering in a dynamic way. Out of the six identified frames, the first five frames (telling to entertain, telling to challenge, telling from real-life experiences, telling from shared experience, responding sensitively) include elements of openness, reciprocity and reaching out to the exchange partners. Incidents where children interpreted the Storycrafting situations through these five frames were charged with enthusiasm, engagement and feeling. Only the sixth frame, responding defensively, exhibits an unwillingness to take a different perspective from one’s own and maintains a static view of culture.

Most of the defensive responses are found in the audio-recorded data from the first cycle of research. Often the class discussions reinforced the sense of belonging within the group at the cost of rejecting the Other, creating a polarization of “us versus them.” Theodorou (2011) comments that children are influenced by polarizing discourses just like adults are and will compete for status in a perceived cultural hierarchy. Because the teacher was leading the discussion in the first cycle, the children conformed to the usual evaluative classroom discourses used when commenting on a text. However, part of the philosophy of the Storycrafting method is to listen to another’s story with an open mind, developing trust and mutuality (Karlsson, 2014). The role of the teacher is therefore crucial in creating a classroom climate that promotes reciprocity and encountering.
After analyzing the data from the first cycle, it was apparent that the methods needed to be changed in order to steer the interaction towards encountering without judgement. To lessen the impact of the teacher’s presence in the next cycle, the children drew pictures instead of commenting verbally on the story. These pictures were sent back to the partner class so that the exchange partners were the recipients of the children’s “reactions” rather than the teacher. The amount of defensive responses was reduced to almost none in the second cycle. When the children were freed from the usual evaluative classroom discourses, they could begin to have a different kind of agency in listening and responding to the stories. They became more receptive to the content of the stories, so their response stories focused on similar themes as their partner’s stories. Due to space limitations, the role of the drawings in the exchange will be discussed in detail in future work.

The participatory approach to investigating children’s intercultural encounters led to interesting results which differed from the existing (adult) models of intercultural learning, which tend to stress critical reflection (e.g. Byram, 1997; Perry & Southwell, 2011; Taylor, 1994). On the surface, some of the stories the children told seemed just silly or subversive. However, by respecting the child perspective during the analysis of the data and reflecting on the stories together with the ethnographic materials, the authors were able to identify more subtle interpretations.

Storycrafting situations are open-ended spaces for children to explore and test limits through, for example, humor because the Storycrafting philosophy celebrates rather than judges (Hohti & Karlsson, 2014). Children’s humor has not been much researched (Puroila, Hohti & Karlsson, 2016), and given its significance in this story exchange, it warrants attention in future research. Play and playfulness is important to all cultural groups of children (Lillemyr, Søbstad, Marder & Flowerday, 2010), making it a good way for children to connect. Children also tend to see the use of imagination as normal and are unfazed by
unusual turns in a story (Karlsson, 2014). Humour has a positive influence on peer acceptance and perceived social competence (Karlsson, 2014). Thus, seeking to entertain others helps to forge and consolidate social relationships.

Class stories were an important opportunity for members of the class to feel relatedness and receive acceptance from their peers. The *telling from shared experience* frame sometimes overlaps with the *telling to entertain* and *telling to challenge* frames since humor and playfulness were some of the strategies employed to achieve a We relationship where the children are insiders to an agreement that is formed as a result of joint activity in a unique situation (Karlsson, 2000).

Reflecting on one’s identity is crucial to intercultural encountering (Abdallah-Pretceille, 2006; Jaatinen, 2015). Stories capture the density of experience and allow children to tap into their narrative mode of knowing (Bruner, 1991). Giving children opportunities to tell stories from their experiences (imaginative or real) promotes narrative identity work. Identities can also change in the process of narrating, since lived life influences the ways we relate to our surroundings and each other (Dewey, 1938).

The *telling to challenge* frame may be difficult for some teachers to accept, given that it challenges traditional divisions of power in school. However, it can be seen as a part of building trust within and between the groups of children and their teachers. If a teacher insists that Storycrafting is a space where children have the freedom to have their voices heard without being judged or reprimanded, the children will continue to want to tell stories and engage in encountering the exchange partners. Teachers should also respect their students’ ability to distinguish between events in real life and the story world, as the narrative space allows children to explore taboo themes in a safe space. It should be stressed though that bullying others is not acceptable even with the mandate of “free speech.”
The contextual situation (school) gives clues as to why some stories challenge social conventions. Usually the teacher has the power to dictate what discourses are allowed and not allowed (Hohti & Karlsson, 2014). *Telling to challenge* is a way for children to seize power in the democratic space of Storycrafting (Hohti, 2016). This view is echoed in the teacher-researcher’s research diary:

> The subject matter of the class story is in some ways quite rebellious […] I feel the children were testing me, wanting to see if I would write down words or ideas that they felt a teacher might oppose in a classroom environment.

This research project has shown that cultural, contextual factors that are at work in the classroom – such as the teacher’s role, the class culture and the prior cultural knowledge children bring with them to the interactions – influence how the children frame their responses to the partner class. The children moved fluidly in and out of I–Thou, I–It and We relationships with each other and the teachers (Buber, 2002/1947; Karlsson, 2000). When the conditions promoted active listening and a non-judgmental atmosphere (Karlsson, 2014), there was more evidence of I–Thou and We relationships.

**Conclusions**

The purpose of this research project was to find out how children encounter each other in an intercultural Storycrafting exchange in the context of an elementary school. The children used the democratic, interactive space of Storycrafting to reinforce existing relationships, such as friendships or sense of belonging to the group (*telling from shared experience*), and to explore their own experiences and identities through narrative (especially when *telling from real-life experiences*, but also during other frames). They engaged in connecting with an unfamiliar group of foreign children and their classmates by *telling to entertain* through humorous and playful stories, as well as by seeking a reaction through
challenge stories that breached social norms. Children rarely get to control classroom discourses (Hohti, 2016), so they used these stories to challenge existing classroom hierarchies of power, where the teacher is in control.

The role the teacher took during Storycrafting sessions had an impact on how the intercultural encounters unfolded. When the teacher controlled classroom conversations, the children viewed the discussion as an academic activity, where the purpose was to evaluate or critique the partners’ stories. The children were more likely to revert to an I–It relationship with the Other (Buber, 2002/1947) whereas when the teacher encouraged a more participatory classroom culture, the children responded more sensitively and started creating a shared narrative culture with the foreign partners, leading to reciprocal intercultural encounters between the groups. Intercultural encounters become meaningful to children when they can influence the content of the exchange. It is a mark of a successful exchange that the children clearly want to encounter each other.

Some interesting findings in this paper pave the way for future research. The role the teacher took impacted on the way the children framed the Storycrafting situations, so the Storycrafting exchange needs to be investigated further from the teacher’s perspective. Changing the method after the first cycle led the children to respond to the stories more sensitively than before. The second design-based cycle produced a rich data set of children’s drawing responses to the stories, which we want to analyze in greater detail to find out how the drawings impacted on the narrative exchange. Although the first two cycles took place during relatively short time periods, the findings show that even a small-scale project can have a positive impact in a classroom. Reproducing the project over a longer time-scale could give an insight into long-term changes in children’s skills and attitudes in intercultural encountering. This intercultural exchange took place within European developed countries, so it would be interesting to reproduce the same project between a developed and a
developing country, as previous research has indicated that traditional exchange projects lead to reproducing stereotypes (Lau, 2015; Mackenzie, Enslin & Hedge, 2016). Furthermore, another exchange project need not seek for a partner class from a distant foreign country, but instead seek to reduce cultural essentialism and Othering between two schools near one another. All schools or classes have local micro-cultures with a mix of cultural backgrounds, when culture is understood in a dynamic way.

The findings of this paper are meaningful because they can help educators bring pedagogies of encountering (Jaatinen, 2015; Kaikkonen, 2004) into their classrooms. A Storycrafting exchange develops encountering through interactions that encourage I–Thou relationships (Buber, 2002/1947) and We relationships (Karlsson, 2000), as well as gives space for children to reflect on their own identities through the medium of a story. Whereas many intercultural exchanges unintentionally view culture as a static conception and maintain power structures between minority and majority groups (Hummelstedt-Djedou, Zilliacus & Holm, 2018), the Storycrafting exchange is based on a dynamic understanding of culture. This dynamic approach allows the exchange partners to share and connect on different cultural levels (Erez & Gati, 2004), rather than essentializing culture into national stereotypes. When educators deliberately promote encountering in an intercultural exchange by creating a non-judgmental, participatory space, the classroom environment could become more receptive to hearing all kinds of voices, not just those of the exchange partners.

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Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity (2012). *Responsible Conduct of Research and Procedures for Handling Allegations of Misconduct in Finland.* Helsinki: Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity.


List of Figure Captions

Figure 1. Erez and Gati’s (2004, 588) dynamic, multi-level model of culture.

Figure 2. This figure shows a theoretical model of an intercultural exchange between two classes. The figure is adapted from Erez and Gati’s (2004, 588) model of culture to show its dynamic and multi-layered nature.
Figure 1.
Figure 2.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Class descriptors</th>
<th>Individual stories</th>
<th>Group stories (2–4 storytellers)</th>
<th>Class stories</th>
<th>Total number of stories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1A</td>
<td>Primary 6, Scotland, age 10–11, 13 students</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1B</td>
<td>4&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; grade, Finland, age 10–11, 19 students</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1C</td>
<td>4&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; grade students from a composite 4&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;–5&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; grade class, Finland, age 10–11, 3 students</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2A</td>
<td>5&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; grade, three classes, an international school in Europe, age 10–11, 49 students</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2B</td>
<td>3&lt;sup&gt;rd&lt;/sup&gt; grade, Finland, age 9–10, 14 students</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. This table shows the distribution of participants (N = 98) across classes in the first and second cycles of research and the types of stories (N = 59) produced throughout both story exchanges.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data</th>
<th>Data descriptors</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transcripts of children’s stories</td>
<td>$n = 59$, 53 pages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audio-recording transcripts of class discussions linked to the story exchange (only for the first cycle of research)</td>
<td>$n = 6$, 01:07:41, 13 participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emails from participating teachers in Finland</td>
<td>$n = 22$, 2 participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researcher diary entries from Scotland and the international school in Europe</td>
<td>$n = 15$, 13 pages</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. A summary of data produced in spring 2015 and spring 2016 in two research cycles of a Storycrafting exchange involving 7 classes, 5 teachers and 98 students. Only the data that informs this article is shown.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frame</th>
<th>Codes</th>
<th>Example data extract</th>
<th>Number of extracts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Telling to entertain</td>
<td>comic character</td>
<td>‘But then the guys that he was playing with were really big guys and they didn’t see the chicken, so the chicken was white and black so they accidentally kicked the chicken instead of the ball and they started playing soccer with the chicken.’ (a class story, the international school in Europe)</td>
<td>n = 121</td>
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<td></td>
<td>exaggeration</td>
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<td>excrement</td>
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<td>metamorphosis</td>
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<td>playful language</td>
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<td>absurd</td>
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<td></td>
<td>laughter</td>
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<tr>
<td>Telling to challenge</td>
<td>breach in convention</td>
<td>‘The penguin came to Iron Land and tried to blow up Iron Land. The penguin accidentally fell into space and fell into a black hole. The penguin blew up the black hole to get out of it. The penguin died.’ (class story, Finland)</td>
<td>n = 119</td>
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<td>death</td>
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<td>illness/injury</td>
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<td>violence/destruction</td>
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<td>getting eaten</td>
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<td>excrement</td>
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<td></td>
<td>opposing authority</td>
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<tr>
<td>Telling from real life experiences</td>
<td>parents as gatekeepers</td>
<td>‘Once there was a girl who lived in a mansion. The girl wanted a dog, but her parents didn’t let her have one.’ (a story by Janika &amp; Iina, Finland)</td>
<td>n = 165</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>family and friends as helpers</td>
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<td>spending time with friends and family</td>
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<td>special occasions</td>
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<td>hobbies</td>
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<td>meeting basic needs</td>
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<td></td>
<td>accidents</td>
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<td>going to the hospital</td>
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<td>pets</td>
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<td>dealing with emotions</td>
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<td>a teacher</td>
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<td></td>
<td>personalizing fonts</td>
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<td>showing ownership</td>
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<td></td>
<td>telling about oneself</td>
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<tr>
<td>Telling from shared experience</td>
<td>real friends and events</td>
<td>‘And then they went to visit John and after they visited John, they bought themselves a home and lived next to John for the rest of their life.’ (a story by Logan, Scotland)</td>
<td>n = 38</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>telling about shared interests</td>
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<td></td>
<td>correcting the language of a shared story</td>
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<td>a sequel</td>
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<td></td>
<td>shared ownership</td>
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<tr>
<td>Responding sensitively</td>
<td>engagement</td>
<td>‘She wanted to see what written Finnish looks like and wanted me [the teacher] to read the story again, but slower this time so she could hear the sounds.’ (researcher diary)</td>
<td>n = 68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>trying to understand a foreign language</td>
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<td>taking the perspective of another</td>
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<td>connecting to prior knowledge</td>
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<td>showing curiosity</td>
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<td>listening actively</td>
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<td>Responding defensively</td>
<td>critiquing the form of the story</td>
<td>‘Well, it didn’t really have a point to the story. All he did was picked up a seed, planted it, [it grew into] a tree and then planted it somewhere else outside.’ (class discussion, Scotland)</td>
<td>n = 41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>confused by the content of the story</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>comparing our stories to their stories</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>lost in translation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>stereotypes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ethnocentric perspective</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3. A summary of the developed frames, codes, sample extracts from the data and the number of extracts identified under each frame. The codes connected to each example extract have been set in bold.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traditional intercultural exchange</th>
<th>Reciprocal intercultural exchange</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Culture conceptualized as static entity</td>
<td>Culture conceptualized as dynamic process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher-led activity</td>
<td>Participatory activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning focuses on individual</td>
<td>Learning is community-oriented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I-It relationship to exchange partner</td>
<td>We relationship with exchange partner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leads to Othering</td>
<td>Leads to reciprocal encountering</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. Comparing the features of a traditional intercultural exchange to those of a reciprocal intercultural exchange.