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Intercultural Communicative Competence as a Contribution to the Development of Historical Consciousness of Prospective Teachers

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Abstract

The fact that Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) also includes historical consciousness is known, but this dimension of ICC has so far been largely unexplored. This article aims to show that virtual cooperation between universities from two different countries can promote not only ICC but also critical historical thinking. Using qualitative research methods, data sets from two different German-American collaborations were examined with regard to this question. The participants were preservice teachers. It was found that a change of perspective was valuable for gains in both ICC and historical consciousness.

Abstract in German

Dass zur interkulturellen kommunikativen Kompetenz (ICC) auch ein historisches Bewusstsein gehört, ist bekannt, aber diese Dimension der ICC ist bisher weitgehend unerforscht. Dieser Artikel soll zeigen, dass virtuelle Kooperationen zwischen Universitäten aus zwei verschiedenen Ländern nicht nur ICC, sondern auch kritisches historisches Denken fördern können. Mit Hilfe qualitativer Forschungsmethoden wurden Datensätze aus zwei verschiedenen deutsch-amerikanischen Kooperationen mit Lehramtsstudierenden auf diese

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Frage hin untersucht. Es zeigte sich, dass ein Perspektivwechsel sowohl für die Entwicklung von ICC als auch von Geschichtsbewusstsein wertvoll ist.

Keywords

Historical consciousness; ICC; perspective; preservice teachers; virtual exchange

1. Introduction

Within the European Union (EU), Byram's model of Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) is a prominent model for language education and has been consistently implemented in English language teaching in particular (Müller-Hartmann & Schocker von Ditfurth, 2020). Through its establishment in the Common European Framework of References for Languages CEFR (Council of Europe, 2020), ICC has shaped language education in Europe like no other model for language learning. It is based on the realization that culture has an influence on language. As the term *Intercultural Communicative Competence* suggests, language learning is viewed as a complex process. According to Byram, it is made up of five so-called *savoirs*: 'knowledge' (knowing), 'attitudes' (being), 'awareness' (reflecting), 'skills' (knowing how) and 'proficiency' (communicating) (Byram, 1997, p. 34). Learning a language also involves understanding the culture's self-image and its influences on language. This expands language learning to include the attitudes, opinions, values, and beliefs of those who speak the language (Hřebáčková, 2019). In the ideal case as described by Byram, this learning process does not take place in a theoretical space with prepared materials, but rather in actual personal contact with the people who actively use the language. This is why student exchanges, internships at foreign schools, language stays in a respective country, or collaborative elements in schools and universities have become indispensable. They give prospective language users the opportunity to use, practice, and reflect on the language skills they have already acquired.

These collaborations are also an elementary component of the curriculum in the field of university didactics, mainly in foreign language departments. Other university units that have organized cooperative seminars with colleagues from other countries over the years have done so mainly out of their own interest and to show students a view of science and didactics outside of German-language discussions. Some studies show how all students can benefit from this type of international exchange, especially in the area of teacher training (Hillinger & Loranc, 2022).

This article will examine the benefits that virtual exchanges at the university level could have in addition to improving language skills by examining cooperative courses. History is a discipline that also benefits from the multi-perspective views presented in collaboration across cultures. When focusing on history didactics, one wonders whether intercultural learning can happen, or whether it happens automatically as part of historical learning.

In order to approach this question, an insight into the literature will be given first. The basic didactic principles of history are examined before the connection between intercultural communicative competence and historical consciousness is discussed. In the second section, two examples of cooperatively conducted seminars with German and American students are explained, each of which is accompanied by a description of the qualitative research methods used in these studies. Next, the results of these studies with regard to the question of whether historical learning necessarily includes intercultural learning are presented. The conclusion provides a discussion of the validity of the results as well as an outlook on future practice.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Theoretical Foundation from a History Didactics Point of View

The basis of all German-language history didactics is the realization that past and history cannot be congruent (Schreiber, 2006). The past is irretrievably gone, it is everything that has ever happened. History attempts to construct the past on the basis of historical remnants of the past. However, the past can never be reconstructed completely as remnants are always perspectival, and the perspective of the constructor and the role that plays in the process of creating history must be recognized. The respective present in which the historical narration is constructed determines the interest in learning about the past. It influences the constructor's interest, attitude, and opinion about a historical object. Therefore, there cannot be one true history (Jeismann, 1990). In German-speaking history didactics a learner should understand that history is always the construction of the respective present and therefore highly perspectival. Internalizing this also means being aware of one's own attitudes, opinions and prior knowledge and constantly questioning them regarding their origins and correctness (Körber, 2021; Seixas, 2017).

There are several competence models in German-speaking history didactics for shaping this overarching goal, which history didactics calls

“reflected historical awareness” or “historical consciousness” (Seixas, 2017, p. 595). The most widespread competence model, which has also found its way into school curricula, is the *Förderung und Entwicklung von reflektiertem Geschichtsbewusstsein*, the so-called *FUER Geschichtsbewusstsein-model* developed by Waltraud Schreiber (2005) and others (Körber, 2021; Kühberger, 2015). The FUER model describes four competencies that are mutually dependent and play a role in the process of constructing and deconstructing history. In order to deconstruct existing narratives and to construct history from existing sources, learners need *historical questioning*, *methodological orientation*, and *factual competences* (Kühberger, 2015; Schreiber, 2005).

The historical *questioning competence* contains the forming of historical questions and also the understanding of existing questions. The two main components of the *methodological competence* are methods for constructing and deconstructing history. The use of these methods leads to *orientation competence*, such as re-organizing the historical ideas and attitudes, reflecting one’s own and other identity and finally the extension of the action disposition. The *factual competence* means that during the learning process, students develop knowledge about historical concepts and structuring methods (Schreiber, 2006). A student that is competent in all of these four categories of historical competence can be described as having a ‘reflective historical consciousness.’ They no longer have rigid, unquestioned ideas or “Geschichtsbild” (Arand, 2007, p. 8), but they ask questions like where their knowledge comes from, and what further information they need to confirm or question the images in their mind.

In school history lessons, the FUER model can be promoted by allowing students to experience the perspectivity of history on several levels. Where appropriate, multi-perspective sources should be used to understand that the past only exists in perspectives. In order to understand that history can also be perspectival, controversial representations should be worked on. This way, it can be understood that the same event can be interpreted differently in the course of history or from the perspective of another culture. The American Civil War, for example, has been reinterpreted several times over the centuries and different interpretations of the same event circulate even today. However, this approach will only lead to success if students are competent in interpreting media. Source analysis techniques that ask about the author's point of view, the type of source, etc., are necessary to enable historical learning because they help to recognize and explain an included perspective. These ideas from German-speaking history didactics meet the ideas of Wineburg (2001) and his Digital Inquiry Group from the American

perspective (formerly known as Stanford History Education Group). Wineburg emphasizes the necessity for teachers to verify, contextualize and evaluate the source material in comparison to concurring statements (2001).

2.2. Intercultural Communicative Competence and Historical Consciousness

Intercultural history learning goes beyond the simple addition of intercultural and historical learning content, as emphasized by the *FUER Geschichtsbewusstsein Model* (Gentner, 2019; Schreiber, 2016). Historical learning can be shaped by the context of interculturality, as defined in language learning. Both elements are mutually dependent, as will be shown below. Comparing the remembrance of historical events from different perspectives can promote historical thinking. At the same time, intercultural discussions of historical topics can promote an understanding of cultural conditionality, which is important for intercultural language learning.

An interview-based study conducted by Fitchett et al. (2023) show that both skills-oriented historical learning and intercultural learning are closely linked in teacher training (Fitchett et al., 2023; Fitchett et al., in press); If intercultural learning is automatically included in historical learning, this also means that, according to Byram, language learning which takes the cultural dimension of language seriously also inevitably includes historical learning. Byram and Wagner (2017, p. 141) therefore call for,

... learning about countries and cultures from an interdisciplinary perspective (including history, geography, and mathematics) related to languages we teach is and should be part of world language education for intercultural communication and that intercultural skills as well as knowledge are required.

Byram and Wagner emphasize that it is not only the culture of the foreign language, molded by the past, that is relevant, but that the teacher should also take into account the identity of the learners, as “Knowing and understanding other people and societies involves knowledge and understanding of oneself and one’s own society” (2017, p.144). This makes it clear that the skills of historical learning and language learning and, in our case, intercultural learning, are mutually dependent.

In Anglo-American pedagogy, there is a concept called democratic citizenship (Starkey, 2003). It is aimed at similar skills that are also targeted by critical historical learning. Byram observes that the critical, comparative analysis of the other and one’s own culture is one of the biggest advantages of intercultural learning. He thus describes precisely the phenomenon that

we can observe in the quotes from the participants. In his essay, Byram also describes the danger of an analysis that remains at the level of discovering differences and that lacks a critical attitude towards one's own culture and adherence to one's own national perspective persists. If critical citizenship education (Byram, 2013) is understood as 'education' to become a 'good citizen', critical reflection on one's own national conditionality is not necessarily desired. In historical learning in a constructivist sense, however, this definition is too narrow. Byram's definition of intercultural communicative competence may need to be expanded or emphasized, as he himself put it: "Put briefly, the aims of teaching languages for intercultural competence include: linguistic, sociolinguistic and discourse competence in language, combined with intercultural competences in the discovery, analysis, comparison and critique of cultures" (Byram, 2013, p. 59). As a result, one's own position should, if necessary, be reflected and changed.

Byram himself has responded to the criticism of his model by adding adjustments (citation needed). But still the simplicity of his model does not meet the complexity of the 21st century. In particular, it neglects the diversity of the concepts of culture and identity. In the present day, these are significantly more complex, flexible, and individualized than they are presented in Byram's first ICC model. In addition to a more diverse speakership, there are also more diverse speech and language methods today, which have been made possible by new technologies (Hoff, 2020).

The analysis and interpretation of different 'cultures' as part of the ICC is also a central aspect in the *FUER-Geschichtsbewusstsein model*. Additional research has shown intercultural learning is not just a part of historical learning but that historical learning automatically means intercultural learning (Gentner, 2019). This competence model of historical learning distinguishes between four basic competences that come into play in reconstruction and deconstruction processes. Each of the four competences questioning, methodological, orientation and factual competence (Kühberger, 2015; Schreiber, 2005), includes approaches that are also familiar with the principle of ICC. For example, the *questioning competence* aims, among other things, to ask self-reflective questions about one's own history or social background and to question one's own norms with the help of possible answers. Added to this is the ability to develop curiosity about everything that is different in order to ask further questions based on this attitude. This recognition and reflection continue in the *methodological competence*. This describes the examination and analyzing of sources and representations with regard to their perspective. Intercultural exchange, such as the one described in this article, certainly makes the greatest

contribution to *orientation competence*. The aim is to recognize the time- and location-bound origin of one's own and other people's identities and to compare collective identities with one another. Global and regional historical insights should be linked with each other and the ability to re- and 'deconstruct' should be trained. This means that learners construct history from the sources (re-construction) and experience that historical products are perspectival. Here they experience plurality of opinion using the example of history. 'Deconstruction' means that current representations are decoded by asking questions about the story or stories. This trains critical judgment. Finally, factual competence also includes knowledge of the cultural conditionality of historical concepts (Gentner, 2019).

	FUER Geschichtsbewusstsein model (Schreiber, 2008)	Contribution of intercultural collaborations (in relation to ICC) (Schreiber 2008)
Questioning competence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asking historical questions • Understanding historical questions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask questions about own knowledge & attitudes because of being confronted with other opinions
Methodological competence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constructing and deconstructing history 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • History and past are always perspectival
Orientation competence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-organizing "Geschichtsbewusstsein" (historical consciousness) • Reflect and extend understanding of one's own identity • Reflect and extend dispositions to act 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Linking global and regional historical insights • Plurality of opinion is experienced • Experience history as part of the identity • Reflect on other's and own history • Train critical judgement
Factual competence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowing about and reflecting on historical terms and ways of structuring history 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Historical concepts are culturally influenced

TABLE (1): THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HISTORICAL COMPETENCES AND INTERCULTURAL LEARNING (BASED ON SCHREIBER, 2008)

The extent to which international virtual exchange can contribute to both areas of competence will be examined below. The research question that guides this analysis is how this relationship between historical and intercultural competencies can be seen in collaborative courses with American and German preservice teacher education students.

2.3. Virtual Exchange Focusing on Social Studies

There is not a lot of research on virtual exchanges among preservice social studies teachers but Good et al. (2005) point out that collaborative online formats can broaden the perspective of teachers and allow them to discover possibilities for implementation with their students. Other articles

like Dawson et al. (1999) give concrete examples for teachers of how to integrate virtual exchange elements into primary classrooms. All show that the likelihood of a social studies teacher using virtual exchange in the classroom increases significantly if they have tried it themselves.

As this article is concentrating on two virtual exchange courses, the work of Hřebačková (2019) must also be taken into consideration. She identified three possible types of collaboration in virtual exchanges. Type 1 describes the purely informative exchange, such as getting to know each other synchronously or asynchronously. Type 2 goes beyond this and describes content-related tasks that are solved in country-specific teams. Finally, Type 3 requires cooperation between teams consisting of members from several countries.

3. Methodology

Two cooperative seminars comprise the basis for the data discussed here. Both seminars were organized between partners from a the University of Charlotte (UNCC), North Carolina and the University of Education Ludwigsburg, Bade-Württemberg, Germany. The seminars aimed at showing preservice teachers' different perspectives on historical topics.

3.1. Cooperative Seminar 1

The first seminar was planned and conducted in the fall/winter semester and was designed as a Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) seminar (Medina & Hestler, 2021). It was designed in response to the lack of reciprocal visits due to the Covid-19 pandemic. COIL is understood to be an instrument for cooperation between professors and students. Students from different countries are meant to work together in mixed groups and solve problems or tasks together. In theory, COIL can also involve a chance for the groups to visit each other. But due to the pandemic, the program needed to stay in a virtual space. The lecturers, Prof. Dr. Adriana Medina (UNCC) and Dr. Carolin Hestler (University of Education Ludwigsburg), therefore organized a cooperation opportunity for students in the Masters of Education in Reading program at the UNCC and for undergraduate students in the History Education program at the University of Education Ludwigsburg. A topic was formulated to appeal to both courses and both groups of students, and it was also intended to promote intercultural exchange: *Global Challenges: Here and There, Then and Now*. The project was divided into four phases. First, the students received input separately in their original courses. Then they got to know each other during an initial meeting within their mixed groups via Zoom. In the main project phase, they worked together on a sub-topic of global challenges. After deciding on a topic within

their groups they mostly divided the groups and did research individually. From time to time, they met within their groups and created the final product. The students prepared a multimedia presentation on a timely topic that was both local and global. The assignment was kept very open to encourage students' creativity, but they had to meet twice with the instructors to see how far they've come and where they needed additional help. Finally, after five weeks of working together, they presented their results in a virtual mini conference. In terms of the theory of virtual exchange, this was therefore a Type 3 exchange, as the students worked together on collaborative tasks (Hřebačková, 2019). As there were phases in which only German or only American students worked together, some tasks can also be described as Type 2, yet they enabled comparisons and the analysis of different perspectives during the discussion (Hřebačková, 2019).

3.2. Cooperative Seminar 2

The second seminar, carried out with a different set of students, took place in the following winter semester between Dr. Carolin Hestler (University of Education Ludwigsburg) and the Teaching Professor of History Dr. Oscar Lansen (UNCC). Both lecturers held two separate history seminars on the topic of the Holocaust.

First, each lecturer held an online seminar session of 90 minutes with the other group. Dr. Carolin Hestler focused on the *'Memory of the Holocaust'*, while Dr. Oscar Lansen looked at the role of the USA during the Holocaust. In a second phase, the students from both countries had the opportunity to discuss their knowledge and attitudes with each other in the form of an online group discussion during one collaborative session. The collaborative elements of this seminar mostly relate to Type 1 tasks. Presenting theoretical input to all participants (here by lecturers) and getting to know each other are the first steps before students will work on collaborative projects for a longer period of time (Hřebačková, 2019).

3.3. Methods of Data Collection

To answer the research question for this study, students' experiences were collected and analyzed using qualitative research methods. The research questions and survey instruments differed. Table (2) on the next page is therefore intended to provide an overview.

Collaborative project	Research Questions	Data Sources	Participants
Cooperative Seminar 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How and to what extent did the collaborative virtual exchange (COIL) encourage intercultural learning? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning outcome self-assessment (competence grid) • Portfolios 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 28 U.S. students • 15 German Students
Cooperative Seminar 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How have concepts of the Holocaust changed among student teachers? • How have the concepts of resistance under National Socialism changed? • Did the structure of the course (including virtual collaborative elements) lead to progress in the area of media literacy? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questionnaires (determining their prior knowledge and attitudes) • Interviews at the end of the seminar • Portfolios (learning process and reflections) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 U.S. students • 13 German students

TABLE (2): OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND DATA SOURCES FOR EACH COLLABORATIVE PROJECT

The students' statements in the form of questionnaires, interviews and portfolios were analyzed according to Mayring's (2015) qualitative content analysis. Oral elements, such as the interviews, were first transcribed. Due to the small study group, the examples presented are not to be understood as a representative sample but as being of purely qualitative nature. Since the studies focused either on intercultural (COIL course) or on historical learning (course on National Socialism), the codes generated form the framework for the question discussed in the following section. The quotes from the participants on which the findings are based are taken from the analysis processes described above.

Even if the research questions in both seminars did not explicitly focus on ICC in historical learning, they provide an indication that both are interlinked and that intercultural learning can therefore make an important contribution to historical learning.

4. Findings

The findings will be presented through the lens of the FUER model (Schreiber, 2008) to show the intercultural element within historical learning. As shown above, the competence of changing your own perspective can mainly be situated within the orientation competence. But it is also important for the questioning competence and therefore can be considered to be one of the underlying competences for historical learning. It is essential for the understanding of history to be able to *change perspectives* in order to understand that history is a construction. This is elementary for the promotion of questioning and orientation skills. Questioning skills require a

consciousness of the present and one's own social conditionality in order to ask questions on this basis. One way in which the learner can become aware of his or her own identity is by meeting learners from other countries. Based on the contrast experienced, questions can be asked which then allow the learner to recognize and question their own perspective (Schreiber, 2006).

The process of historical learning ultimately leads to orientation competence. This means that what has been learned in school has an influence on thinking and acting in the present, outside of history lessons. Students should be enabled to recognize perspectivity not only in history lessons and be able to change their perspective using historical examples. Rather, it is about questioning one's own ideas and attitudes beyond history lessons and in society as a whole (Schreiber, 2006).

In addition, it became apparent that some students also made progress in their *historical consciousness / Reflective historical awareness* which can be described not only as the changing of perspective but as an understanding of historical topics being remembered differently depending on the cultural context. Looking at the FUER model, reflected historical consciousness cannot be found within the competence descriptions. When examining the model, it becomes clear that it was developed to describe reflective historical consciousness. This means that in German history didactics, historical consciousness is understood as the overarching goal of all historical learning. Taking into consideration the complexity of historical topics, it is clear that this can also occur partially (Schreiber, 2006)

One element of reflective historical awareness is also the understanding of *multiple, culturally conditioned meanings of individual terms*. It will be shown that this element of the factual competence was also achieved, at least in one project. The *methodological competence* played a role especially in the second seminar when participants experienced different approaches to teaching history.

Within the findings, the quotes will show that students made progress in these competences while experiencing ICC. The italicized quotes taken from both seminars will be identified by the name of the seminar, the student number, and the seminar year.

4.1. Change of Perspectives

In the two student projects discussed here, all students described the experience of changing perspectives to varying degrees. One American student wrote in her portfolio about the COIL project: *"This project really gave me the opportunity to leave my little bubble and to see different viewpoints"*

(Portfolio COIL project American student 13, 2020). She describes how she became aware that she lives in her own social context and is shaped by the ideas that exist there. Contact with ‘the other’ made her aware of this. The student leaves open whether she questioned her attitudes. But simply experiencing other perspectives encouraged her to question (*questioning competence*). Other action researchers also underline this observation, which shows that collaborations lead to “... openness, communication skills, empathy, worldview and self-awareness” (Syahrin et al., 2023, p. 9).

German students also spoke of attitudes towards American students they had before the start of the cooperation. In some cases, they only became aware of these during the project, but in other cases they were also relativized as one German student said with regard to the American students’ prior knowledge of the Holocaust, for example: “... *interessant, dass ich auch ... mit sehr vielen Vorurteilen gegenüber den amerikanischen Studierenden... reingegangen bin.... Da wurde in Teilen halt auch mein Bild oder meine Vorurteile relativiert*” [interesting that I... went in with a lot of prejudices towards the American students ... My image or my prejudices were also partly relativized...] (Interview KaBö, cooperation on Holocaust, German student, 2021). The student has experienced that their own ideas do not have to correspond to those of others and, based on this, can question their own perceptions and ideas. A promotion of *orientation competence* is recognizable. It shows how critical citizenship education and intercultural competences can be combined (Byram, 2013).

As Fitchett et al. (in press) point out, German students also took a more analytical and theory-based approach. One student said in an interview after the project on the Holocaust: “... *die Diskussion mit amerikanischen Studierenden hat mir auch klar gemacht, dass Sichtweisen einfach auf nationalen, kulturellen Ebenen... geprägt und geformt sind*” [... the discussion with American students also made it clear to me that views... are simply shaped and formed on a national, cultural level] (Interview SiWo27, cooperation on Holocaust, German student, 2021). They thus summarize the insight on the theoretical level. Another student goes even further by relating the knowledge gained directly to his previous theoretical knowledge of history didactics: “*Betrachtung von Perspektiven und die Verwendung unterschiedlicher Vermittlungsmittel ist ein entscheidender Faktor, damit Geschichte als Konstrukt wahrgenommen und verstanden werden kann*” [The consideration of perspectives and the use of different means of mediation is a decisive factor so that history can be perceived and understood as a construct] (Portfolio SaSt29, cooperation on Holocaust, German student, 2022). It is clear that the participants have not only understood historical

didactic theory, but that they can directly link experiences in the present to historical skills. With this statement, they demonstrate a high degree of *orientation competence*.

4.2. Historical Consciousness/Reflective Historical Awareness

The statements of other American students showed that their progress went beyond simply recognizing other perspectives: *“After participating in the COIL project, I know more about the German society and am interested in news from other countries now. ...When I came into this project, I had my own stereotypes of German students that I had learned in my German course experience throughout high school”* (Portfolio COIL project American student 1, 2020).

The student describes a learning process on the factual level, from which further interest, i.e., further questions, arose (*questioning competence*). In addition, the student is aware of their ideas and can explain the origin of these. This statement relates to a large extent to *orientation competence*, but also shows that the student is capable of self-reflection. If this competence can also be applied to historical objects, elements of historical consciousness are recognizable here, for example being aware of one's own historical convictions and their origin.

It seems that the cooperation and thus the experience of other perspectives directly led some students to question their own ideas and attitudes. Some students commented on possible causes for different conceptions of history in the USA and Germany. One German student mentioned in the interview:

... der Holocaust ist bei uns immer persönlich, emotional sehr mit Geschichtskultur-Aspekten geprägt und das ist eben in Amerika nicht so. Und in Amerika ist es eben ein sehr nüchtern, sehr rational und aus unserer Perspektive auch bisschen verkürzter Unterrichtseinheit, die so neben anderen Unterrichtseinheiten steht. Für die Amerikaner ist dann ihre nationale Geschichte deutlich präsenter, deutlich bedeutsamer und deutlich ausführlicher. [... the Holocaust is always very personal and emotionally charged with aspects of historical culture here, and that's not the case in America. And in America, it's a very sober, very rational and, from our perspective, a bit abbreviated teaching unit that stands alongside other teaching units. For the Americans, their national history is much more present, much more significant and much more detailed]. (Interview SiWo27, cooperation on Holocaust, German student, 2021)

In this quote, it becomes clear that the student links and classifies phenomena observed in the cooperation, such as the fact that - in their view - the Holocaust is dealt with very briefly in the USA, with possible causes (*orientation competence, methodological competence*). The student recognizes that due to different historical conditions, a different collective historical consciousness prevails in the two countries and that this influences historical culture and curricula. They form a factual judgment by drawing a conclusion on the content with the help of the discussions and conclude with a value judgment for which they adopt the perspective of the other.

Others were challenged by opinions from other countries to reflect on their own historical consciousness: *“Ich habe das Gefühl, dass wir in so ,ner Art Echokammer den Holocaust in Teilen thematisieren, weil wir eigentlich NUR von der Täterperspektive ausgehen...”* [I have the feeling that we address the Holocaust in a kind of ‘echo chamber’ because we actually ONLY start from the perspective of the perpetrators] (*Interview KaBö23, cooperation on Holocaust, German student, 2021*). The student recognizes their consciousness of history and what has influenced it. They analyze their own ideas as socially influenced due to a collective historical consciousness that is strongly influenced by the perpetrator perspective. The quote shows that they are not only aware of their own historical attitudes; they also know about the reasons for their convictions. They only became aware of this fact by being confronted with another picture of the topic. It is questionable whether this realization would also have occurred without a confrontation with others.

4.3. Examination of Multiple, Culturally Conditioned Meanings of Individual Terms

During the presentations of the COIL project (cooperative seminar 1), the term ‘race’ was used by American students in different contexts. In the subsequent discussion, a German student pointed out that this term is no longer used in Germany due to its use under National Socialism. The term ‘ethnie’ is rather used in order not to devalue groups of people. This led to a discussion about the term ‘race’ as the American students wanted to hold on to it as an identity-forming characteristic.

Both American and German students stated that this discourse led to a particular rethinking:

As can be seen in my description of the entire process of the project and our group work in particular, my understanding on how words and things are received, and this depends on the upbringing and the culture people live in, supports my development at an exemplary level. I feel this does indicate a

growth for me because while I have previously been aware of this fact in theory, I couldn't have given a specific example or explained it any further. Especially understanding the different connotation of "race" and "Rasse", made me realize the different relationship one might have to a word depending on where one is from, while other words have the exact same connotation all over the world. (learning outcome self assessment, COIL project German student originally in English, 2021)

As alluded to in this quote, German students pointed out that the term 'race' is very much tainted by its use in Germany during the National Socialist era. During this time, the term was used to identify 'inferior' and 'superior races' and ultimately to eliminate supposedly 'inferior races'. The German students, who were all studying history, tended to prefer the term ethnicity. Some American students could understand the argumentation of their German fellow students but still did not want to do without the term 'race'. For them, ethnicity and race were not the same. One person of color, for example, said that she partly identified with her 'race' and that many of her friends and family members felt the same way. Taking away the word 'race' would rob them of a piece of their identity.

This example opens up the field to another significant aspect of understanding history, namely, the role of language. History is mostly present through language and also the past is available to us in the form of written sources. The past is often unavailable to us due to language barriers.

4.4. Contributions to Methodological Competences

Experiencing a lesson from the guest lecturer was part of the cooperation in the Holocaust project. The subsequent reflection focused a lot on the different methodologies used by the lecturers. It became clear that the aims of the lecturers differed. The German students noted that the American lecturer's primary goal was to impart knowledge, while the German lecturer placed more emphasis on presenting and adopting perspectives and forming factual and value judgments (*Sach- und Werturteil*). One student commented as follows:

... sondern, dass es genau darum ging, eben verschiedene Perspektiven aufzuzeigen, und das war von Frau S. immer so, dass man sehr viel denken musste und man war viel mehr irgendwie dabei, sich selber immer zu reflektieren und selber Inhalte mitzunehmen. Und beim Herr Lansen war es eher so, dass man viele Inhalte präsentiert bekommen hat [but that it was precisely about showing different perspectives, and that was always the case with Ms. S., that you had to think a lot and

you were much more somehow always reflecting on yourself and taking content with by yourself. And with Mr. Lansen, it was more the case that you were presented with a lot of content] (Interview SaSt29, cooperation on Holocaust, German student 2021).

However, the students also recognized that this could be due to the topic of the Holocaust, as the German students could be assumed to have significantly more prior knowledge than their American fellow students simply due to their socialization in the German school system. The same student reflected on his observations in the portfolio after the interview: *“Insbesondere in den Gesprächen mit den amerikanischen Studierenden ist deutlich geworden, dass die Interpretation und die Perspektive auf Geschichte immer abhängig vom Standort ist und dass dieser im Wesentlichen die Lehre und Vermittlung prägt”* [Especially in the conversations with the American students, it became clear that the interpretation and perspective on history is always dependent on the location and that this essentially shapes the teaching and communication] (SaSt29 cooperation on Holocaust, German student, 2022). The collective historical consciousness is heavily dependent on past experiences and shaped by present-day society. This in turn shapes historical content in schools and universities. At the same time, school and university didactics in turn influence the historical consciousness of students and prospective teachers.

In addition to discussions with students, events with professors from other countries can help to reflect on this cycle of self-assurance. Prof. Lansen focused in his lesson on the attitude of the USA during the Holocaust and thus implemented a further perspective for the German students. The following quote shows that the chosen content was directly suitable for questioning the students' ideas:

Aber wenn ich selber mich reflektiere, sind meine eigenen Geschichtsbilder auch davon geprägt, dass die Amerikaner eben gekommen sind und dass sie's befreit haben.... Und deswegen fand ich ganz interessant, dass der Dr. Lansen eben thematisiert hat, den, also wie der Antisemitismus wahrgenommen wurde, oder wie der da auch stark in Amerika vertreten war [But when I reflect on myself, my own views of history are also shaped by the fact that the Americans came and that they liberated it ... And that's why I found it very interesting that Prof. Lansen addressed the issue of how anti-Semitism was perceived, or how it was also strongly represented in America] (Interview SaSt29, cooperation on Holocaust, German student, 2021).

The student admits that they had a rigid, unquestioned idea or *Geschichtsbild* (Arand 2007) of the role of the Americans in the Second World War before the lesson. The chosen topic promoted a cognitive dissonance in the student, who then questioned and adapted their ideas. Prof. Lansen's lesson triggered the development of a reflective historical consciousness in this student and the methods used helped the student deconstruct their former opinion.

4.5. Impact on Later Practice

Students from both countries stated in all projects that they would very much like to participate in such a project at the university again. Most of them also stated that they would like to use virtual collaborations with their students in their (future) school classes, as they had experienced themselves.

I would love to do something similar and offer my own students this great opportunity to get in contact with students from another country, work with them and being able to see global problems or other international topics from different points of view and from a different society with different values. (Portfolio COIL project, German student, 2021)

I would absolutely love to connect my students with students from another country to [...]. (Portfolio COIL project, American student, 2020)

Even if the scope of a cooperation is likely to vary and often fails due to the language barrier, especially for German-speaking school classes, the students nevertheless recognized the advantages of such an exchange. This observation is in line with the findings of Dooly (2020), who was able to show that more than half of the student teachers she surveyed who experienced a virtual exchange during their studies themselves went on to do one with their future school classes.

But even if such a cooperation at school level does not materialize, the student teachers still see benefits for their future careers:

... ich glaube, ...den größten Nutzen sehe ich wahrscheinlich darin, dass ich als Lehrkraft irgendwann eine multikulturelle Klasse vor mir sitzen haben werde und davon ausgehen muss, dass Kinder, die in anderen Kulturräumen groß werden, sich nicht mit dem Holocaust in der Art und Weise beschäftigt haben werden. [I think ... the greatest benefit I see is probably that as a teacher I will have a multi-cultural class in front of me at some point and I have to assume that children who grow up in other cultural areas will not have dealt with the Holocaust in

the same way] (Interview SiWo27, cooperation on Holocaust, German student, 2021).

It does not necessarily require cooperation with a school in another country in order to experience different perspectives on a historical topic. Classes in a multicultural society, as for example in Germany, also offer opportunities to experience the perspective of history and opportunities to recognize, analyze and reflect on different perspectives. However, the students' perspectives must also be taken seriously as such.

5. Limitations

Looking at the results, some limitations must be noted regarding the validity of the statements made: The number of participating students in both studies (COIL project 41; Holocaust seminar: 15) makes it clear that the observations are more a matter of individual experiences that cannot be generalized. Furthermore, the two seminars focused on different research projects. Interviews, portfolios, and questionnaires are each subject to different principles of analysis. Therefore, the conglomerate of results presented here can be considered for further investigations.

6. Discussion

Despite the described limitations, the students' statements give pre-indications of different areas of skills acquisition. First, in the category '*changing perspective*' it could be shown that the confrontation with other opinions helped the students to become aware of their personal attitudes. Second, progress was also observed in the area of '*historical consciousness*'. Some students were able to reflect on the cultural ties of their own ideas of history. Third, the observations regarding the meaning of individual, *culturally and historically conditioned concepts* should also be seen in this context. The term 'race' in particular showed the students that the meanings of terms are subject to change.

Focusing on the historical development of the words 'race' and 'Rasse' it becomes clear why they were understood differently. Before the beginning of the 20th century, the term was understood as a biological category. It was not until then that the meaning changed, according to Hund (2023, p. 72): "It was transformed from an instrument of defamation and oppression into one of resistance and self-confidence. It was given a social dimension, but not stripped of its basic biological algae." He describes the phenomenon that the term was adopted by the Civil Rights movement in the USA. From a historical perspective it can be said that a term that was originally intended to discriminate, was taken over by those who were to be discriminated against

and “turned into an instrument of resistance” (Hund, 2023, p. 80). The German student argued with the term in the historically influenced way as biological and with intention to discriminate. The American student on the other hand used the term socially, which means in the way it became popular during the Civil Rights Movement.

We read written sources that have been recorded for us in the past in past language. From these and other, non-language-based sources, such as archaeological finds or pictorial sources, we construct history with the help of language again. By producing history through speaking or writing, we once again create a narrative that uses our present-day language (Gentner, 2019). In these ‘translation processes’, misunderstandings and difficulties can occur. The past language of the sources must be ‘translated’ into today’s language. In doing so, the historian takes into account a change in terminology, as just seen in the example of ‘race’ and ‘Rasse’, but also the author’s attitudes and perspective in order to interpret what he might have meant by the statement in the context of his time (Fried, 1996).

According to Zarate (2003), intercultural competence also includes knowledge of the cultural development of terms. Due to different historical developments, terms can have different connotations in other cultures. In German language, for example, there are a number of terms that are tainted by National Socialist usage. They are sometimes an indicator of the political convictions of politicians. When representatives of the extreme right today present themselves as democratic but use terms such as “Umvolkung” (repopulation), “Zersetzung” (decomposition), or “gleichgeschaltete Presse” (synchronized press)¹, they are deliberately using National Socialist terms to stir up certain fears and strengthen resentment. Prospective history teachers must be sensitized to this use of language so that they can later make students competent in dealing with statements of rightwing politicians in their present. Intercultural exchange adds an important layer to the experiences explained above. In this way, students learn that language is also perspectival and is shaped by history and the collective historical consciousness of a society. The data indicates that students experienced how certain linguistic terms undergo changes depending on time and geographical space or cultural affiliations.

Fourth, the experience of seeing a lecturer from another country in a seminar gave the students the opportunity to adopt ideas for their own *teaching methods* in the future and to understand that people from other

¹ These are terms that cannot simply be translated, and what is presented here is the approximate meaning. The author suggests that interested readers investigate the historical and social connotations of these terms.

cultures consider other aspects of a topic to be important. Fifth, participants mentioned they would like to participate in such projects again², but were cautious with regard to the transferability of *cooperative events* with other countries in later school lessons. However, they saw the advantage of such a project in their own awareness that within an immigration society, different opinions as well as cultural and historical imprints can also be found within a classroom. An international virtual exchange can enable students to experience these opportunities for themselves and thus raise awareness of the perspectives in later classes (Dooly & Sadler, 2013).

It is clear that promoting historical learning through virtual exchanges also means encouraging intercultural learning (Dooly & Smith, 2020; Starkey & Savvides, 2009). Findings have shown that projects with collaborative elements are highly beneficial for preservice teachers. Even if cooperation is only possible to a limited extent, it already promotes a change of perspective and the adoption of perspectives. This study demonstrates that even short cooperative phases in seminars lead to a historical consciousness being promoted through the experience of ICC.

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² Therefore, cooperative elements became an integral part of a new course at the University of Education Ludwigsburg which is called “Critical Antisemitism Education” (*Antisemitismuskritische Bildungsarbeit*). Student teachers are given the opportunity to acquire knowledge about the history of Judaism, religion and the theories and manifestations of antisemitism from different perspectives, including international theories. Based on the experience of international cooperations, the module “Antisemitism from an international perspective” was included as a permanent component (Arand et al., 2024; also see University of Education, n.d.)

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