

## Foreign-language teaching and studying in Chilean and Finnish classrooms as seen by teachers

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### Abstract

This article reports Chilean and Finnish foreign-language (FL) teachers' perceptions of teaching and study realities in their own FL classrooms. Communicative language teaching (CLT) is used as the teaching–studying–learning methodological framework of an international KIELO project (= the acronym for Finnish “kieltenopetus” meaning “language teaching”), whose online survey was used to collect data for this article. We aim at answering the following research question: What are the FL teachers' main approaches to teaching and studying in Chilean and Finnish FL classrooms and what is the FL classroom teaching and study reality like in these two countries? The data were collected from 83 Chilean and 147 Finnish FL teachers through an online survey covering 15 key themes of CLT and including 115 Likert-scale statements and 8 open-ended questions. In the descriptive data analysis, both Chilean and Finnish FL teachers claim that they encourage their students to use the target language considerably and that they use communicative oral tasks. For both groups of participants, however, teacher-centeredness and use of textbook score relatively high. The two-cluster analysis revealed a context-dependent cluster and a context-independent cluster. Context-dependent teachers tended to favor communicative oral tasks, real-life tasks and their own language tasks, whereas context-independent teachers favored more non-communicative tasks. Context-dependent teachers proved more student-centered than context-independent teachers. For Chilean and Finnish research participants, the use of mother tongue in foreign language classrooms appears to be an issue despite the growing need of foreign language communication.

**Key words:** Foreign language teaching and studying, communicative language teaching, teachers' perception of teaching and studying.

### Introduction

This article, focusing on comparative research findings of an international KIELO survey, reports some Chilean and Finnish foreign-language (FL) teachers' perceptions and interpretations of teaching and study realities in their own FL classrooms.

An international language project called KIELO (= Language Teaching) was launched at the University of Helsinki, Finland, in 2009, and is now embracing researchers in Chile, Finland, Japan and Spain. The main research task of KIELO is to look deeply into teaching and study realities in FL classrooms, that is, how FL teachers analyze their own teaching and their students' study practices. KIELO is grounded in three language-pedagogic principles: (i) the framework of the didactic teaching–studying–learning process, where all three components are equally important and complementary, (ii) FL teachers' beliefs, values and perceptions about teaching, studying, learning, students and curricula and their practical and theoretical subject knowledge as channeling their teaching, and (iii) the role of the socio-cultural school-based and language classroom-specific context. We also argue that FL teachers' professional development calls for meaningful reflection of their own teaching. In this article, special emphasis is laid on communicative language teaching (CLT) generally regarded as the dominant FL methodological approach for more than 30 years (e.g., Ellis, 2012; Richard & Rodgers, 2014) and hence naturally as the teaching–studying–learning methodological framework of the KIELO project survey.

### **1. CLT: the teaching–studying–learning methodological framework**

Communicative language teaching (CLT) is grounded in several conceptions of learning. They together take into consideration a current holistic view on learning and provide us with an appropriate means of looking into the challenges that FL teaching has to encounter. For example, humanistic-experiential views of FL learning emphasize cooperative studying and self- and peer-reflection of one's studying and learning (e.g., Nunan, 1992). In line with the cognitive-constructivistic approaches, FL learning is regarded as individual information construction based on the students' earlier language knowledge (Sfard, 1998; Skehan, 1998), highlighting rich and repeated language practice (e.g., Anderson, 1995). In the socio-cultural approach, on the other hand, FL teaching, studying and learning are mediated by social and cultural contexts (e.g., Vygotsky, 1978) and learning, at the individual level, is seen to be followed and supported by social-level communication and learning (e.g., Lantolf, 2000; Säljö, 2000). The contemporary socio-constructivistic and socio-cultural views underscore communicative use of a foreign language including interaction and scaffolding (e.g., Lantolf, 2000; Donato, 2000; Van Lier, 2000).

The main goal of CLT is communicative competence (CC). Therefore, a communicative FL classroom has to meet the challenges that the topical widened view of CC presents (Harjanne & Tella, 2007; 2008). In the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR, 2001), communicative competence is described as consisting of a language learner's and user's general competences, communicative language competences and communicative language activities and

strategies. CLT presumes that all components of CC, not only language learners' and users' linguistic competences but also their sociolinguistic and pragmatic competences and, for instance, their attitudes, sociocultural knowledge, intercultural skills, study skills and interactive strategies are taken into account. Furthermore, it calls for an integrated practice of relevant subcomponents and all sub-skills (listening, reading, writing, speaking).

CLT focuses on expressing meaning and using a foreign language in communication in social interaction (e.g., Richards & Rogers, 2014). As a pedagogical consequence, the main focus in language classrooms should shift from teacher-centeredness to student-centeredness. This focus should cover (i) planning teaching and studying, (ii) teaching and studying themselves as actions including communicative tasks and topics dealt with, (iii) evaluative reflecting and assessing teaching, studying and learning. Student-centeredness easily leads to dyadic or small group work and to directing practice with the target language, in other words, Dewey's classic "learning by doing" comes true. In CLT, teachers' and students' roles change from what they used to be in traditional language teaching. The teacher's role could be described as follows: a scaffolding mentor, a task manager, a feedback giver, a reflecting learner, i.e., a teacher as a researcher of one's own work. The teacher is also expected to talk less and listen more. The student's role is to be active, communicative, participatory, interactional, reflective, creative. Besides, students have much more control and responsibility of their own study and learning process.

## 2. Previous research

The main KIELO-based research interest in this article is whether communicative language teaching is or is not reality in foreign-language classrooms and how it is interpreted and implemented. Many studies (e.g., Ellis, 2003; Gatbonton & Segalowitz, 2005) show that CLT is surprisingly far from reality in many FL classrooms.

Chilean teaching practices of English mostly remain teacher-led and either grammar-based or audiolingual oriented with slight traces of communicative teaching (Díaz & Morales, 2015). There is a generation of grammar-oriented in-service teachers of English who both teach in primary and secondary education under stressing working circumstances and also supervise prospective teachers of English. In addition, there exists another generation of teachers of English who work under the same conditions, but are apparently more willing to take part in in-service training of varied nature, offered by the Ministry of Education and they strive to make their teaching more communicative and student-centered. As for coursebook use, the reality is varied depending on the type of school – public, semi-public or private. There seems to be in general a high rotation of different commercial or state-produced coursebooks and their use is widespread in Chilean

schools and among teachers of English because they are somehow seen as a tool to deal with long teaching hours and different groups of students (Díaz, Alarcón & Ortiz, 2015).

As to Finnish FL classrooms, what appears to be rather common is that teachers of English use a lot of Finnish in their classes (e.g., *The assessment of pupils' skills in English in eight European countries*, 2002). Some studies indicate that students' use of the target language is not very active (e.g., Nikula, 2007) and that linguistic structures are practiced as isolated from meaning and from a genuine communication context (e.g., Alanen, 2000). In addition, quite a few research findings show that the textbooks and exercise books play a major role in FL classrooms (e.g., Jalkanen & Ruuska, 2007) and that teaching is teacher-centered (Hinkkanen & Säde, 2003). It is important, however, to note that there also are Finnish studies (e.g., Harjanne, 2006) that show the genuine potential of CLT, such as student-centered practicing of a foreign language, students' active participation in interactive communication in the target language and peer-scaffolding.

There is some tension between what teachers believe should be done to learn a foreign language and what actually happens inside a classroom. Questions arise from the fact that many teachers claim in questionnaires that they use CLT, while observations *in situ*, alas, show that they have continuing recourse to traditional grammar-based approaches. One explanation for this obvious conflict may be that the teachers have not properly understood the CLT principles (see Brown, 2001), which is why they are not able to implement communicative practice accordingly. CLT may also be rejected by teachers who misinterpret its principles (e.g., Thompson, 1996), for instance, by thinking that CLT only focuses on spoken communication and ignores accuracy (see e.g., CEFR 2001). Besides, not too many FL teachers used to traditional teacher-centered teaching are convinced that CLT could develop students' FL learning properly (Gatbonton & Segalowitz, 2005; Ellis, 2003; see also Borg, 1999). Borg (2006) claims that the teachers' cognition and their ways of teaching are affected by their beliefs of their teaching and their students' studying and learning. According to Borg (2006), teachers should reflect on their teaching experience in order to be more cognizant of it and that way more capable of questioning and developing it. It is also one of the aims of the KIELO survey to make FL teachers reflect on their own teaching and their students' studying.

### **3. KIELO survey: research task and data collection**

Based on the KIELO project surveys carried out in Chile and in Finland, this article concentrates on answering the following research question: What are the FL teachers' main approaches to FL teaching and studying in Chilean and Finnish FL classrooms? In other words, what is the teaching and study reality like?

The KIELO survey items were constructed on the basis of prior research and theory of CLT (e.g., Ellis, 2003; Skehan, 2003). The Chilean and Finnish respondents were asked to report on their own teaching and their students' studying in their FL classrooms. The survey consisted of 115 statements with a Likert-scale (1–4) and 8 open questions. The 115 statements cover 15 key themes related to communicative language teaching: 1) teacher/student roles in the FL classroom; 2) teacher-centeredness vs. student-centeredness including planning of teaching, choice and performance of tasks and assessment; 3) native language vs. target language used by the teachers and the students; 4) emphasis of reading, writing, speaking and listening; 5) task features (mechanical and context-isolated exercises of words and structures vs. communicative tasks); 6) focus on meaning vs. form; 7) grammar exercises vs. tasks; 8) exercise book vs. teachers' own tasks; 9) individual vs. group work; 10) text book vs. authentic materials; 11) traditional teaching and studying in the classroom vs. studying on the Internet and informal learning outside the classroom; 12) practicing of study skills; 13) scaffolding (teacher–student, student–student); 14) differentiation, and 15) language and intercultural communication. The responses to the 8 open questions are not included in this article.

The Chilean survey was sent to different universities and schools through the country in 2011 via the University of Concepción E-form system. The Chilean respondents were 84 teachers of English, 68 female and 16 male teachers. 49 teachers were in the 20–30 age range and 35 were over the age of 30. The Finnish survey was sent to the members of the Federation of Foreign Language Teachers in Finland (SUKOL). It was conducted online in 2010 via the University of Helsinki E-form system. The Finnish respondents consisted of 132 female and 15 male FL teachers, 90 of them between 30–50 years old, and 57 over 50 years old. English was taught by 102 teachers. Other languages taught included Swedish, German, French, Spanish, Russian and Italian.

#### **4. Data analysis and results**

This section will approach two levels of analysis: the first descriptive analysis will compare Chilean and Finnish foreign-language teachers' responses in terms of internal consistency, means (M), standard deviations (SD), and minimum/maximum values per variable. The second level of analysis will be a K-means cluster analysis with a two-cluster solution.

##### **4.1. Descriptive analysis**

In the light of internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha), the reliability of all 20 summary variables for both countries is high (Table 1). Among the three highest reliability measures, Chile scores high in *Student using target language* (.88),

*Integration of language and culture* (.87) and *Teacher using target language* (.85), whereas Finland evidences *Integration of language and culture* (.90), *Peer scaffolding* (.83) and *Encouragement in using target language* (.81).

As for the three lowest reliability measures, Chile scores .49 for *Use of textbook*, .59 for *Use of ICTs* and .60 for *Communicative grammar tasks*, while Finland scores low in *Communicative written tasks* (.58), *Communicative grammar tasks* (.65) and *Teacher-centeredness* (.69). Both countries share *Integration of language and culture* as one of the highest reliability measures and *Communicative grammar tasks* as one of the lowest reliabilities.

It is no surprise that both Chilean and Finnish foreign-language teachers claim that they encourage their students to use the target language considerably (M=3.56 for Chile and M=3.39 for Finland) (Table 1). In addition, the Chilean teachers view the use of the target language in the classroom on the part of both teachers (M=3.25) and students (2.94) as happening considerably in the classroom. Some contradictory Finnish evidence results, however, from *Teacher using target language* (M=2.53) and *Student using target language* (M=2.76); thus, these two summary variables are only slightly true and not in line with considerable *Encouragement in using target language*. Both groups of teachers claim to adhere to the principles of communicative teaching in their classrooms in the form of *Communicative oral tasks* (Chilean M=3.03 and Finnish M=2.96), *Peer scaffolding* (Chilean M=3.35 and Finnish M=2.95) and *Real-life tasks* (Chilean M=2.94 and Finnish M=2.89).

For both groups of participants, the *Teacher-centeredness* variable scores high (M=2.91 for Chile and M=2.82 for Finland), which triggers to wonder how communicative a teacher-centered classroom may be if the teacher assumes a protagonist role. Both groups differ slightly regarding the role of *Students as participants*, because Chile scores a mean of 2.80 and Finland scores a mean of 2.13. The *Use of textbook* variable for both countries scores relatively high, being M=2.82 for Chile and M=2.98 for Finland, which may be conflicting if textbooks are used as a backbone for language teaching and learning and contradictory since communicativeness of the used textbooks and tasks is open to question (cf. Bergman, Oksanen & Veikkolainen, 2009; Kaukonen, 2010; Kivilahti & Kalaja, 2013). There are also differences with regard to the *Use of authentic materials*. Chile has a 2.92 mean and Finland a 2.05 mean, a contradictory result concerning the principles of communicative language teaching.

It is also clear that standard deviation scores among the Chilean teachers are higher than the Finnish teachers' scores. The Chilean teachers, on the one hand, differ a great deal in variables such as *Use of own tasks* (SD=0.72), *Non-communicative tasks* (SD=0.70), *Communicative oral tasks* (SD=0.69), *Collective creation of discussion* (SD=0.64), *Student using target language* (SD=0.63),

Communicative written activities (SD=0.63), Real-life tasks (SD=0.63), Teacher using target language (SD=0.61) and Use of authentic materials. In brief, the Chilean teachers differ noticeably in eight variables that are fundamental for the implementation of communicative language teaching. The Finnish teachers, on the other hand, differ the most in Use of own tasks (SD=0.67), Integration of language and culture (SD=0.57), Non-communicative tasks (SD=0.55) and Use of ICTs (SD=0.55).

**Table 1:** Comparative summary variables for Chile (CH) and Finland (F): number of items, internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha), means (M), standard deviations (SD) and minimum/maximum values per variable.

Summary variable	N° of items	Cronbach's $\alpha$		M		SD		Min. /max,	
		CH	F	CH	F	CH	F	CH	F
Teacher-centeredness	8	.61	.69	2.91	2.82	.40	.39	1.6/3.9	1.5/3.8
Student-centeredness	12	.73	.79	2.53	2.69	.42	.34	1.7/3.8	1.6/3.7
Student as a participant	12	.77	.74	2.80	2.13	.40	.34	1.7/3.7	1.3/3.1
Teacher using target language	6	.85	.81	3.25	2.53	.61	.50	2.0/4.0	1.5/4.0
Student using target language	7	.88	.71	2.94	2.76	.63	.40	1.3/4.0	1.6/3.9
Encouragement in using target language	3	.70	.81	3.56	3.39	.49	.54	2.3/4.0	2.0/4.0
Communicative oral tasks	3	.79	.74	3.03	2.96	.69	.53	1.3/4.0	2.0/4.0
Communicative written tasks	2	.67	.58	2.81	2.56	.63	.52	1.5/4.0	1.5/4.9
Real-life tasks	3	.71	.69	2.94	2.89	.63	.49	1.7/4.0	1.7/4.0
Communicative grammar tasks	3	.60	.65	2.91	2.63	.56	.53	1.3/4.0	1.3/4.0
Non-communicative tasks	2	.79	.69	1.74	2.26	.70	.55	1.0/3.5	1.0/4.0
Collective-creation of discussion	4	.80	.77	2.84	2.26	.64	.54	1.3/4.0	1.0/4.0
Peer scaffolding	4	.84	.83	3.35	2.95	.54	.53	2.0/4.0	2.0/4.0
Use of textbook	4	.49	.79	2.82	2.98	.48	.52	1.8/3.8	1.5/4.0
Use of own tasks	3	.77	.74	2.99	2.52	.72	.67	1.0/4.0	1.0/4.0

Use of authentic materials	7	.78	.76	2.92	2.05	.61	.47	1.6/4.0	1.1/3.7
Use of ICTs	5	.59	.77	2.82	2.09	.52	.55	1.6/4.0	1.0/3.8
Integration of language and culture	9	.87	.90	2.95	2.66	.56	.57	1.2/4.0	1.3/4.0
Mentoring in study skills	6	.73	.75	2.87	2.42	.55	.48	1.7/4.0	1.5/4.0
Differentiation	7	.72	.73	2.63	2.47	.50	.44	1.7/3.9	1.3/3.7

Note: The descriptors for means (M) in the analysis are as follows: 1 = not true (does not happen in my classes); 2 = slightly true; 3 = considerably true; 4 = fully true

## 4.2 K-means cluster analysis

Once summary variables had been created, a K-means cluster analysis with a two-cluster solution was conducted, leading to two clusters named as a context-dependent cluster and a context-independent cluster. As for Chile, 55 FL teachers were labeled as context-dependent and 28 as context-independent. In the case of Finland, 60 FL teachers were classified as context-dependent and 71 as context-independent teachers. Table 2 describes the means and mean differences of the summary variables for the Chilean and Finnish participants.

In both countries the means of the two clusters are statistically significant ( $p < .05$ ) except for the Teacher-centeredness variable ( $t = 1.727$ ,  $df = 81$ ,  $p = .08$ ) in Chile, and Use of textbooks ( $t = -602$ ,  $df = 129$ ,  $p = .5489$ ) in Finland. For the Finnish and Chilean teachers, the context-dependent teachers have a higher mean in most summary variables.

### 4.2.1 Context-dependent approach to FL teaching

For the Chilean FL teachers, the largest difference on the mean (.93) and the order of the summary variables (-13) is in *Student using target language* and the second largest difference on the mean (.91) and the order of the summary variables (-11) is in *Real-life tasks* for the clusters 'context-dependent teaching' and 'context-independent teaching'. For the Finnish FL teachers, the largest difference on the mean (.77) and the order of the summary variables (-9) is in *Use of own tasks* and the second largest difference on the mean (.64) and the order of the summary variables (-6) is in *Integration of language and culture*. In the Chilean context-dependent teachers' classroom the students use the target language more than in the context-independent teachers' classroom, while the Finnish context-dependent teachers design tasks themselves more than the context-independent teachers. *Student using target language*, *Real-life task*, *Use of own tasks* and *Integration of language and culture* are key aspects of communicative FL teaching.



To assess each context-dependent group of teachers, we will explore the two largest summary variables and their conforming variables.

**Table 2:** The means (M), mean differences and order differences of the summary variables for Chilean (CH) and Finnish (F) FL teachers in a two-cluster solution.

Summary variable	Context-dependent teaching M		Context-independent teaching M		Mean difference		Order difference	
	CH	F	CH	F	CH	F	CH	F
Student using target language	3.25	2.92	2.32	2.6	.93	.32	-13	2
Real-life tasks	3.24	3.12	2.33	2.68	.91	.44	-11*	-2
Communicative oral tasks	3.34	3.19	2.44	2.75	.90	.44	-10	-2
Teacher using target language	3.48	2.74	2.79	2.32	.69	.42	-1	-1
Collective creation of discussion	3.05	2.56	2.42	2	.63	.56	-4	-1
Integration of language and culture	3.13	3.01	2.56	2.37	.57	.64	-1	-6*
Encouragement in using target language	3.75	3.69	3.19	3.13	.56	.56	0	0
Use of authentic materials	3.09	2.32	2.56	1.84	.53	.48	1	-2
Mentoring in study skills	3.05	2.68	2.53	2.2	.52	.48	1	-1
Use of own tasks	3.15	2.93	2.68	2.16	.47	.77	2	-9*
Communicative grammar tasks	3.07	2.83	2.60	2.43	.47	.4	3	1
Use of ICTs	2.97	2.4	2.52	1.85	.45	.55	1	-2
Student as a participant	2.94	2.28	2.51	1.98	.43	.3	3	1
Communicative written tasks	2.96	2.73	2.54	2.4	.42	.33	5	3
Peer scaffolding	3.49	3.19	3.08	2.72	.41	.47	0	-3
Differentiation	2.76	2.65	2.38	2.32	.38	.33	2	1
Student-centeredness	2.65	2.81	2.29	2.6	.36	.21	0	3
Use of textbook	2.89	2.93	2.65	2.99	.24	-.06	11	6
Teacher-centeredness	2.96	3.07	2.80	2.83	.16	.24	11	2
Non-communicative tasks	1.55	2.12	2.11	2.39	-.56	-.27	0	9

### Chilean context-dependent FL teachers

At analyzing the summary variable *Student using target language* in more detail for the case of Chilean context-dependent teachers, we can see that the largest mean difference (.94) is in the variable 'I require my students to speak the target

language in my lesson' (Table 3). However, even though Chilean teachers do their best to encourage foreign language communication, it is not less true that students do use their mother tongue to interact among themselves.

**Table 3:** The means (M) and standard deviations (SD) of the variables in the summary variable *Student using target language* of the two Chilean FL teacher clusters.

Teaching approach	Context-dependent teaching M (SD)	Context-independent teaching M (SD)
I require my students to speak the target language in my lessons.	3.76 (.47)	2.82 (.77)
When my students speak Spanish in my lessons, I interfere and motivate them to use the target language.	3.64 (.52)	2.71 (.81)
My students speak the target language in my lessons.	3.38 (.56)	2.07 (.60)
My students speak the target language in the discussion tasks.	3.09 (.73)	2.07 (.81)
My students speak the target language when doing the grammar tasks.	2.96 (.79)	2.21 (.69)
My students speak Spanish in my lessons.	3.05 (.70)	2.11 (.69)
My students speak Spanish when doing pair or group work that require the target language.	2.85 (.73)	2.25 (.84)

The Chilean context-dependent teachers also design *Real-life tasks* more than the context-independent teachers, as Table 4 shows. The largest mean difference (1.10) between context-dependent and context-independent teaching is in the variable 'My students practice the target language in communication contexts that resemble the ones outside the classroom'. The purpose of communication is the key when a student wants to learn a foreign language. It is much more meaningful for communication that participants get engaged in situations and activities that foster the use of language in real life. The context-independent teachers may make their students practice the language in contexts that are more pedagogically adapted and hence further apart of what happens in real life communication, as it is the case of many coursebook activities. For Glass (2013) in Chilean English teaching there are very few meaningful texts offered to students in English classes.

The fact that the context-dependent teachers emphasize integrated skill development is also linked to the practice of the target language in real life contexts, where students should have learning opportunities to develop their communicative competence. The context-independent teachers may focus more

on the development of the receptive skills, and grammar and vocabulary activities, which are obviously just one aspect of language proficiency.

**Table 4:** The means (M) and standard deviations (SD) of the variables in the summary variable *Real-life tasks* of the two Chilean FL teacher clusters.

Teaching approach	Context-dependent teaching M (SD)	Context-independent teaching M (SD)
My students practice the target language in communication contexts that resemble the ones outside the classroom.	3.35 (.55)	2.25 (.84)
My students practice the target language in communication contexts linked to their living environment.	3.27 (.65)	2.39 (.74)
I focus on many-sided language proficiency in my lessons.	3.09 (.67)	2.36 (.56)

**Table 5:** The means (M) and standard deviations (SD) of the variables in the summary variable *Use of own tasks* of the two Finnish FL teacher clusters.

Teaching approach	Context-dependent teaching M (SD)	Context-independent teaching M (SD)
I plan communicative tasks myself, if there aren't any in the textbook.	3.13 (.81)	2.2 (.67)
I plan tasks myself to meet my requirements.	3.00 (.84)	2.17 (.63)
I change textbook tasks to meet my requirements.	2.67 (.75)	2.13 (.72)

### **Finnish context-dependent FL teachers**

Looking at the summary variable *Use of own tasks*, Table 5 shows that the largest mean difference between the Finnish context-dependent and context-independent teachers is in the variable 'I plan communicative tasks myself, if there aren't any in the textbook'. The context-dependent teachers clearly see the importance of preparing communicative tasks if they are not present in the textbook. This also highlights the role of interaction and communication when students are involved in such tasks. The context-independent teachers probably view language learning as an individual process of code proficiency mainly.

The context-independent teachers focus more on the textbook than in the design of communicative tasks, as we can see that in the statement 'I change

textbook tasks to meet my requirements', the context-dependent teachers might eventually disregard textbook tasks completely if they believe they do not meet their requirements.

As for the *Integration of language and culture* summary variable, the Finnish context-dependent teachers emphasize non-verbal communication in the target culture more than context-independent teachers, with the largest mean difference (.76) (Table 6). Under the view of communicative practice both verbal and non-verbal communication plays a central role in the process of understanding interlocutors and doing oneself understood. In the same line, the context-dependent teachers stress the communication styles of the target culture more than the context-independent teachers (mean difference .70).

**Table 6:** The means (M) and standard deviations (SD) of the variables in the summary variable *Integration of language and culture* of the two Finnish FL teacher clusters.

Teaching approach	Context-dependent teaching M (SD)	Context-independent teaching M (SD)
I emphasize also the non-verbal communication of the target culture in my teaching.	2.73 (.78)	1.97 (.63)
I emphasize the communication styles of the target culture in my teaching.	3.15 (.66)	2.45 (.65)
I help the students to interpret the target language speaker and consider his/her cultural background.	2.62 (.83)	1.94 (.79)
I connect a lot of cultural exchange material in my teaching.	2.82 (.75)	2.14 (.68)
The cultural styles of the target language communication are a part of my teaching.	3.33 (.60)	2.72 (.78)
I think I have skills to teach communication between cultures.	2.92 (.62)	2.32 (.73)
Communication between cultures is a part of my teaching.	2.97 (.76)	2.38 (.72)
I help the students to see the cultural ties of the native and target language.	3.07 (.66)	2.48 (.58)
The culture of the target country is a part of my teaching.	3.47 (.68)	2.96 (.69)

This idea leads to argue that the latter might concentrate more on linguistic competences, like pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary, whereas the former understand the importance of relying on the communicative context and culture of speakers and interpreters.

The Finnish context-dependent teachers have a higher mean on all the variables of *Integration of language and culture*. They see for example the importance of using cultural exchange material in teaching (mean difference .68), enriching the learning environment with the cultural styles of the target communication (mean difference .61). It is also encouraging that they see themselves having skills to teach communication between cultures (mean difference .60). Whereas the context-independent teachers are likely to view the cultural aspects of language teaching as dissociated from the target language and communication.

#### 4.2.2. Context-independent approach to FL teaching

To assess the context-independent Chilean and Finnish FL teachers, we will discuss the summary variables *Teacher-centeredness* and *Use of textbooks* and their conforming variables for Chile. These summary variables possess two of the smallest mean differences (.16 and .24 respectively). *Non-communicative tasks* and *Use of textbook* for Finland hold a mean difference of .27 and -.06 for each respective summary variable.

#### Chilean context-independent FL teachers

The summary variable *Teacher-centeredness* is one aspect of context-independent approach to FL teaching. The mean for the Chilean context-independent FL teachers in the summary variable of *Teacher-centeredness* is 2.80 (Table 2). Table 7 shows that the largest mean difference (.41) between context-dependent and context-independent teaching is in the variable 'I'm an observer'. The context-dependent teachers value their role as an observer of the FL teaching, studying and learning process.

The context-independent teachers view themselves as controllers and as the ones who ask the questions, not the students, all the time. In all those teaching roles that imply that the students assume a more active role and the teacher a less protagonist role, the context-independent teachers score less than the context-dependent teachers, as can be seen in Table 7. The differences between the two teacher clusters concerning the *Teacher-centeredness* variable is statistically significant, that is, the context-independent teachers use a teacher-centered approach more than the context-dependent teachers.

Teacher-centered classrooms provide few opportunities for students' interaction and participation and teachers assume a controlling role, which is often the case of large classes contexts. Some Chilean FL teachers often state that one of the major limitations to communicatively-oriented teaching for them is the excessive number of students they have per class, which does not enable them to implement a communicative approach. A second reason they often point out is the increasing classroom misbehavior levels they have to deal with when teaching

large classes, which forces them to be more teacher-centered so as not to lose control of their lessons.

**Table 7:** The means (M) and standard deviations (SD) of the variables in the summary variable *Teacher-centeredness* of the two Chilean FL teacher clusters.

Teaching approach	Context-dependent teaching M (SD)	Context-independent teaching M (SD)
I'm a mentor of students.	2.96 (.84)	2.75 (.93)
I'm a resource person and a group work manager.	3.22 (.74)	2.82 (.86)
I'm an observer.	3.62 (.65)	3.21 (.92)
I'm a feedback giver.	3.49 (.66)	3.46 (.58)
I'm a controller.	2.45 (.83)	2.64 (.91)
I ask, my students answer.	2.76 (.72)	2.86 (.65)
My students answer my questions one at a time.	2.42 (.71)	2.21 (.79)
My students work individually.	2.78 (.90)	2.46 (.74)

For the *Use of textbook* summary variable, the mean is 2.65 for the Chilean context-independent FL teachers (Table 2). The mean difference (.24) of the context-dependent and context-independent teachers is very small and not statistically significant. Historically FL teaching in Chile has been characterized by the presence of commercial textbooks that claim to develop students' communicative competence. To evaluate this summary variable more closely, we present the items below (Table 8).

**Table 8:** The means (M) and standard deviations (SD) of the variables in the summary variable *Use of textbook* of the two Chilean FL teacher clusters.

Teaching approach	Context-dependent teaching M (SD)	Context-independent teaching M (SD)
The tasks in exercise books correspond to my view.	2.36 (.82)	2.21 (.69)
The exercise books I use have communicative tasks.	3.20 (.68)	2.86 (.71)
The communicative tasks in the exercise books correspond to my view.	2.58 (.69)	2.25 (.65)
I use a textbook.	3.40 (.81)	3.29 (.94)

The context-dependent teachers have a higher mean on all the variables of *Use of textbook* than the context-independent teachers (Table 8). The largest mean difference (.34) between the two FL teacher clusters is in ‘The exercise books I use have communicative tasks’. This raises the issue of how important it is for teachers to participate in the adoption of the textbook they will be using in the FL classroom. On this regard, Chilean FL teachers who work in either state or semi-private schools receive textbooks free for them and their students from the Ministry of Education and so do Finnish FL teachers. Private schools often make their own selection of textbooks, based, very often, on the decision made by their staff of FL teachers.

### Finnish context-independent FL teachers

The Finnish context-independent FL teachers value *Non-communicative tasks* (M=2.39) more than the context-dependent teachers (M=2.12) (Table 2). The context-independent teachers perceive that students can do grammar tasks without any reference to a communicative context (Table 9). This principle is totally aligned with traditional approaches to language teaching, studying and learning, where linguistic aspects are supposedly to be the backbone to fully master a foreign language. Therefore, the context-independent teachers tend to give more non-communicative grammar tasks than the context-dependent teachers (mean difference .20). The same pattern goes for vocabulary tasks. The context-independent teachers do more vocabulary tasks without any communicative reference than the context-dependent teachers (mean difference .36).

**Table 9:** The means (M) and standard deviations (SD) of the variables in the summary variable *Non-communicative tasks* of the two Finnish FL teacher clusters.

Teaching approach	Context-dependent teaching M (SD)	Context-independent teaching M (SD)
The students do vocabulary tasks, in which they practice words without communication context.	2.1 (.66)	2.3 (.60)
The students do grammar tasks, in which they practice grammatical structures without communication context.	2.13 (.60)	2.49 (.61)

For the summary variable *Use of textbook*, the Finnish context-independent teachers’ mean is 2.99. The mean difference (.06) of the context-dependent and

context-independent teachers is small and not statistically significant, which does reflect that both teacher clusters use textbooks a lot.

**Table 10.** The means (M) and standard deviations (SD) of the variables in the summary variable *Use of textbook* of the two Finnish FL teacher clusters.

Teaching approach	Context-dependent teaching M (SD)	Context-independent teaching M (SD)
I use a textbook.	3.60 (.59)	3.62 (.54)
There are communicative tasks in the textbooks I use.	3.03 (.78)	2.97 (.65)
The textbooks meet my requirements for communication.	2.57 (.70)	2.69 (.73)
Textbooks tasks meet my requirements.	2.53 (.75)	2.68 (.67)

Table 10 shows that context-independent teachers value the *Use of textbook* more than the context-dependent teachers, except for the variable ‘There are communicative tasks in the textbooks I use’, where the context-dependent teachers score a bit higher. These results can be contrasted against those of the Chilean context-dependent FL teachers, who perceive the use of a textbook as part of their teaching practices.

### Conclusion

One of the KIELO project’s ultimate aims has been to open up foreign language classroom doors, to increase the language teachers’ willingness to discuss their teaching practices and the ways these are justified, while enhancing their methodological readiness to try something new, to discuss and then use various starting points, and—finally—to understand one’s teaching (work and action) and to understand, together with their students, the students’ study practices better than before.

Looking into the reality of foreign language classrooms seems more and more important and captivating. According to our analysis, the foreign language teaching and studying “status quo” looks paradoxical. While a growing number of communication skills are required and expected outside of school, a lot of L1 is used in FL teaching instead of the target language. In addition, language is studied through atomistic linguistic particles, at the expense of holistic, meaningful communication. It is therefore justified to ask why FL teachers ignore the fact that language teaching should aim at communicative language proficiency, skills to use foreign languages in communication. Why do they also ignore the current view, according to which communicative language proficiency is best learnt by using the



target language in reciprocal, communicative situations? Why do they largely ignore the core features of CLT: use of the target language, student-centeredness, interactive communication, focus on meaning, the communicative goal, the connections with life outside the classroom, integrated practice of listening, reading, speaking and writing? There is little information of why FL teachers behave as they do. It is important to find out what role teacher education and study materials, for instance, play in FL teaching. In addition, Chile and Finland view foreign language teaching, studying and learning as a necessity for the educational, social, economic and political development of their societies and citizens. The KIELO project has been founded exactly for correcting some of these misunderstandings and for finding out why foreign languages are taught, studied—and, hopefully—learnt the way they are.

The two-cluster analysis conducted in this study identified two approaches to foreign language teaching: context-dependent teaching and context-independent teaching. The context-dependent teachers tend to favor communicative and real-life tasks and get very much involved in the design of their own language tasks, whereas the latter favor vocabulary and grammar tasks dissociated from a communicative context.

It is interesting to see that even though communicative language teaching has been highlighted ever since the 70s, foreign language classrooms in Finland and Chile still struggle with how to make students much more involved and central in their own process of studying and learning. It seems hard for the participants in this study to balance teacher participation with student participation in their FL classroom. The apparently clear-cut divide between teacher-centeredness and student-centeredness seems to work well in theory but turns out much more conflicting in foreign language teaching and study practice.

It is then understandable to conclude that the FL teachers in this study experience a constant tension between teacher-centeredness and student-centeredness in their classrooms as the process of teaching, studying and learning a foreign language is mediated by not a few number of contextual variables that make teachers become more or less teacher-and-student centered depending on what they are confronted in their lessons.

Likewise, the *Use of textbook* summary variable is another conflicting issue for Chilean and Finnish participants. It is undeniable that from the perspective of communicative teaching, textbook use may at times be demonized as a tool that does not necessarily promote communication and interaction among learners. However, for these FL teachers textbook use serves its purpose of being a commonly used resource for foreign language teaching, which leads to think that the challenge is not whether textbook use is effective for communication, but how

teachers learn to use textbooks to foster meaningful interactive communication from the perspective of their students.

No doubt, it has to be highlighted the positive results obtained by the Chilean and Finnish FL teachers with regard to communicative language teaching. Several features of communicative teaching score high in the view of both groups of participants. *Encouragement in using target language, Communicative oral tasks and Peer scaffolding* are key variables for the effective implementation of a communicative language classroom. In addition, Chilean and Finnish context-dependent FL teachers score high in variables such as *Integration of language and culture and Student using target language*, which are also communicative language features that strongly focus on expressing meaning, using a foreign language and engaging in social participation. One last evident concluding remark of this study is that the Chilean FL teachers' view on the reality of their teaching and their students' studying seems to adhere to the principles of CLT more than the Finnish FL teachers, at least from the perspective of what they claim they know, believe and think.

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