Intercultural Competence and implications for the Native Speaker Model

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The term 'intercultural competence' has been around for a number of years now in the language learning field as well as other contexts.

Jane will present an overview of Intercultural Competence (IC) with a focus on language learning in higher education, discussing the implications of established frameworks of IC for language teachers and raising questions around the persistence of the native speaker model for language learning.
MANY CHANGES IN THE LAST 100 YEARS:

• From Grammar-Translation Method via Direct Method, audiolingualism and cognitive and humanistic approaches to a broadly communicative one.

• Communicative competence as proposed by Hymes (1972): Language as communication (as opposed to a fixed entity) now drives our approach to language teaching.

• Hymes’ initial proposal mentions both linguistic and cultural competence, the reference to socio-cultural competence was largely ignored by the ensuing proponents of a communicative approach to language learning.

• It is in the last 10-15 years, with increased European exchange and increased globalisation that there has been a shift to a focus upon culture in language learning.
Early models of intercultural competence:

• provide long lists of topics (knowledge) e.g. greetings, personal possessions, cosmetics, tobacco and smoking, verbal taboos, cafes, bars, and restaurants, contrasts in town and country life, patterns of politeness, expletives, keeping warm and cool, medicine and doctors
  
  (e.g. Brooks, 1964, Chastain, 1976)

• ‘[Learners can] find bridges to another culture, anticipate foreign events and discover alternatives to their own cultural patterns of thought.....this interpretation is an ongoing process of exchange and negotiation of meaning between the two cultures.’

  (Kramsch, 1993:437)

• ...language pre-eminently embodies the values and meanings of a culture, refers to cultural artefacts and signals people's cultural identity......... The meanings of a particular language point to the culture of a particular social grouping, and the analysis of those meanings - their comprehensions by learners and other speakers - involves the analysis and comprehension of that culture.

  (Byram, 1989:41)
Comparative approach:

• Can be seen to be limited and stereotyping e.g.

• ‘a Spaniard and a Briton see the world in different ways because one is thinking in Spanish and the other in English. People in the British Isles think and act in a certain way because their thoughts are channeled along Anglo-Saxon grooves which are different from neo-Latin, Japanese or Chinese grooves’

(Lewis, 2006:8)
Language = Culture?

• (Agar, 1994) *Languaculture*:

‘whenever you hear the word language or the word culture, you might wonder about the missing half. ... “Languaculture” is a reminder’, (1994:60)

E.g. the concept of *Schmaeh*

• Risager (2006:134) recognises ‘the idiolectical nature of language as an aspect of the life history of the individual’:

‘Foreign language/culture learning involves many cultures, not simply mother tongue & foreign language/culture. We would do well to recognise the complexity of these relationships. In any classroom there may be a variety of cultural/linguistic backgrounds.’

• What we say to whom, in what context and why is also a ‘political’ act (Street, 1991; Fiske, 1990; Scollon & Scollon, 2001; Burr, 1995, Piller, 2011)
Later models

- Recognise the importance of cognitive and affective factors, requiring participation and emotional involvement of learners (e.g. Mantle-Bromley, 1992, Stern, 1992, Jensen, 1995,)

- Knowledge, Attitudes, skills and critical cultural awareness (Byram, 1997)

- Focus on participant-observation (e.g. Roberts et al) LARA and INTERCULTURE Projects

- Focus on whole person (Liddicoat and Scarino, 2013).

- the role of self/other understanding ‘ the relativity of self and other ‘(Kramsch 2011)

- Native speaker as an insufficient/impossible model (also influenced by ELF):
• Native or intercultural speaker?
• ‘let it pass’ (Firth & Wagner, 1997)

• Are we still expecting our students to emulate a fictitious native speaker?
Bryam (1997): Intercultural communicative competence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Attitudes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Of self and other;</td>
<td>Political education</td>
<td>Relativising self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of interaction;</td>
<td>Critical cultural awareness</td>
<td>Valuing others (savoir être)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>individual and societal</td>
<td>(savoir s’engager)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(savoirs)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Skills                          |                                  |                                    |
| Interpret and relate            |                                  |                                    |
| (savoir comprendre)             |                                  |                                    |

| Skills                          |                                  |                                    |
| Discover and/or interact        |                                  |                                    |
| (savoir apprendre/faire)        |                                  |                                    |
Byram’s 1997 model

- **Attitudes:** relativising self; valuing others (*savoir être*): Curiosity and openness, readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and belief about one’s own.

- **Knowledge:** of self and other; of interaction, individual and societal (*savoirs*): Knowledge of social groups and their products and practices in one’s own and in one’s interlocutor’s country, and of the general processes of societal and individual interaction.

- **Skills:** interpreting and relating (*savoir comprendre*): Ability to interpret a document or event from another culture, to explain it and relate it to documents from one’s own.

- **Skills:** discover and/or interact (*savoir apprendre/faire*): Ability to acquire new knowledge of a culture and cultural practices knowledge, attitudes and skills under the constraints of real-time communication and interaction.

- **Education:** political education; critical cultural awareness (*savoir s’engager*): The ability to evaluate critically, and on the basis of explicit criteria, perspectives, practices and products in one’s own and other cultures and countries.
  - (Byram, 1997:50-53)
Intercultural learning?

• Byram’s ICC model: originally intended to support language teachers in the classroom (focus on language learners as coming from different ‘cultures’)

• Outlines in detail objectives for learners with examples of how ICC can be operationalised within a languages curriculum
### An example:

**Skills: discover and/or interact (savoir apprendre/faire):**

- Ability to acquire new knowledge of a culture and cultural practices knowledge, attitudes and skills under the constraints of real-time communication and interaction. E.g. c) identify similar and dissimilar processes of interaction, verbal and non-verbal, and negotiate an appropriate use of them in specific circumstances

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**The Intercultural speaker can use his/her knowledge of conventions of verbal and non-verbal interaction (of conversational structures; of formal communication such as presentations; of written correspondence; of business meetings; of informal gatherings, etc) to establish agreed procedures on specific occasions, which may be a combination of conventions from the different cultural systems present in the interaction**
## An example of criteria

### Pronunciation /Intonation  NS focus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Very good. Few minor errors in pronunciation and intonation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Good. Comprehensible with one or two repeated errors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Competent performance with repeated mistakes, but still comprehensible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Difficult to understand for native speaker.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Pronunciation/Intonation with a focus on clarity of communication  IS focus

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Very good. Pronunciation allows for clear communication throughout</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Good. Comprehensible with one or two lapses in clarity which require close attention.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Largely competent performance with some lack of clarity, but overall still comprehensible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Difficult to understand for audience.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### An example of criteria (2)

#### Empathy/ knowledge discovery / critical cultural awareness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Takes every opportunity to discover culture-related knowledge; actively seeks partner’s perspectives and articulates own perspective. Able to evaluate own and others’ perspectives in order to compare and contrast with dominant views and/or evaluate taken-for-granted phenomena.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Takes opportunities to discover culture-related knowledge; actively seeks partner’s perspectives and articulates own perspective. Able to relate own and others’ perspectives to dominant views and/or evaluate taken-for-granted phenomena.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Evidence of discovery of culture-related knowledge; some evidence of seeking partner’s perspectives and ability to articulate own perspective. Able to relate own and others’ perspectives to dominant views and/or evaluate taken-for-granted phenomena.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Intermittent or very little evidence of information-seeking or interest in partner’s perspective or in articulating own perspective. Little evidence of relating own and others’ perspectives to dominant views and/or evaluating taken-for-granted phenomena.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Further developments in ICC

• Euro- or indeed Anglo-centric approaches tend to focus on the individual as competent?

‘How can future definitions of intercultural competence better integrate this relational aspect, given its prominence within non-western conceptualizations of intercultural competence? [...] where is intercultural competence situated - within the individual or within all individuals in the interaction?’

(Deardorff, 2006:266).

• Non-western conceptualizations of intercultural competence also place emphasis on the social, historical and political contexts in which intercultural competence is considered, as well as raising questions of (in)equality

(for example, Zaharna, 2009, Nwosu, 2009, Piller, 2011).
(How) is tandem intercultural?
An example

• Tandem learners’ conversations about word meaning
• Cooperar/cooperate
• The broader frame: evidence from association activities undertaken by 62 native English and 62 native Spanish speakers
• Conversation analytic framework: How/whether ‘culture’ is relevant to interlocutors in the conversation:

‘Who has introduced culture as a relevant category, for what purposes and with what consequences?’

(Scollon & Scollon, in Schiffrin et al. 2001:545).
Language learning in tandem takes place when native speakers of two different languages work together in order to learn from each other.

- **Face-to-face:**
  - In bilingual pairs
  - In bilingual groups
  - In trilingual (or multilingual?) groups

- **At a distance:**
  - Through 1-1 email
  - Through group email (e.g. email forums)
  - Through virtual spaces (e.g. Chat, Skype, other virtual learning environments)

- All forms have in common a learning partnership with the same tandem principles.
• **Autonomy:** You are responsible for your own learning. Tandem learners are responsible for identifying their own needs, setting their own goals and finding the means to achieve them.

• **Reciprocity:** You are responsible for ensuring mutual benefit. Both partners have a responsibility towards each other to help each other learn so that they benefit equally from the exchange.

• **Intercultural learning:** As learning in tandem is based upon communication between two members of different language communities and cultures, it also facilitates cultural learning. (Brammerts, 1995, Brammerts, 1996).
Country/language categorisation

A range of purposes for drawing on country/language categories

- To understand/make understood perspectives on the conversation (own or partner’s), including asking one’s partner for their opinion/view.
- To mark difference in the meanings of the word.
- To mark similarity in perspectives on the meaning of the word.
- To identify a need for help from one’s partner, e.g. help with vocabulary.
- To identify with the ‘other’ culture/country/language (i.e. that normally associated with their partner).
‘Native’ Spanish and ‘Native’ English word associations relating to the word ‘cooperate/cooperar’
Lily & Maica (*cooperar*) Sequence 4

- 1. M: pero para ti cooperar significa (.) ayuda, o?
   *but does co-operar mean (.) help for you, or?*
- 2. L: um (.) no, no ayuda
   *um (.) no, not help*
- 3. M: ¿no?
   *no?*
- 4. L: hablar, pero...
   *to speak, but...*
   *for me it means to help (L laughs)...it means completely different, it has a completely different meaning*
   *it’s both for me. to help and to speak*

7. M: pero hablar, cómo?
   *but to speak, in what way?*

8. L: hablar (. ) si tú um (. ) di, dices a mí, um vas a, quiero que, no (. ) co-operas? con yo
   *to speak, if you um, say to me you are, I want, you (. ) are not co-operating with I*

9. M: conmigo
   *with me*

10. L: conmigo, Y (. ) yo coopero? jeje
    *with me and (. ) I co-operate (laughs)*

11. M: pero no sé no entiendo (2.0) no lo sé (1.0) es que para mí, cooperar es ayudar, en todos los sentidos
    *but I don’t understand (2.0) I don’t know (1.0) for me, co-operate is to help in all its meanings*
Lily & Maica, Sequence 6

1. L: emmm sí creo que en tu (..) what’s opinión?
   ummm yes I think that in your (..) what is ‘opinion’?

2. M: opinión jeje
   opinión (laugh)

3. L: opinión la palabra cooperar significa ayudar, pero
   a mí um significa un poco más serioso?
   opinion, the word co-operar means to help, but for me
   it means a little more serious (serioso)

4. M: serio
   _serious/formal (serio)
5. L: serio (..) um cuando pienso de la palabra cooperar, pen pen pienso de la palabra cooperar, um pienso de una un situación bastante serio, como en una comisaría, porque

serio (..) um when I think of the word cooperar, I think of the word um I think of a quite a formal situation like in a police station, because

6. M: ah

ah

7. L: La palabra es bastante formal

the word is quite formal

8. M: yo, sí la utilizaría (.) además por ejemplo, también (..) sí, es que para mí es igual que ayudar. (..) no (.) es igual, no es el mismo significado, pero prestar tu servicio a alguien o eso, ayudar, sí, lo que tú has dicho

I would use it as well for example, also (.) yes, for me it is the same as ayudar, (..) it isn’t (.) the same, not the same meaning, but to offer your help to someone, or to help, yes, what you have said
Gill (NS) and Eva (NNS): (cooperate) Sequence 1

6 G like um the people who have contact with do you generally co-operate well with them or

7 E oh then I might not have a good understanding of the word um=

8 G =what did you think, what did you say that you thought it meant co-operate

9 E um for example um two countries that co-operate uh with um fighting against terrorism [for example

10 G okay yeah] what you use this word for uh States and Britain co-operating to to fight terrorism and
11 E yeah

12 G what in this case you mean it's bad cooperation

13 E Well maybe it's maybe they have a good co-operation but [for bad purposes=

14 G oh I see] sure
6. G It’s very difficult to think of any other, I think we’ve exhausted the uh (e jeje) (2.0)

7. E uh yeah I can think of the of the police, for example? um that sometimes to do their investigations needs the co-operation of people (G uhuh) that have knowledge about

8. G that’s

9. E specific areas (Gmhm) or

10. G or things that have happened yeah (..) yeah good idea, actually yeah, people that co-operate with the police [or

11. E how] you call that witnesses also co-operate with the law

12. G mhm
Some considerations

• We cannot assume that tandem learners will necessarily ‘discover’ languacultural (see Agar, 1994) differences in word meaning, even when given opportunities to do so.

• We cannot always assume that the ‘native speaker’ will know the language ‘better’ than the non-native speaker (words don’t always have ‘fixed’ meanings).

• Tandem learners orient to each other as people rather than as ‘native speakers’.
Some thoughts

• Intercultural (in this case as defined by Spanish-English mother tongue speaker interaction) communication cannot be defined by assuming ‘typical’ or ‘common’ behaviours identified within named/specific groups to operate across languages.

• A comparative approach of language and culture gives no space for cultures across linguistic boundaries, nor for what Risager calls ‘the idiolectical nature of languaculture as an aspect of the life history of the individual’ (2006:134).

• ‘Tell us what to do’
REFERENCES


Fiske, J (1990) Introduction to Communication Studies, Routledge (2nd Ed.)


Stern, H.H., (1992), Issues and Options in Language Teaching OUP.


Jane Woodin, ELE-UK Conference, 12.06.15