1. Language as mediator

A different language is a different vision of life.

_Federico Fellini_

No one doubts the importance of language in our lives. In fact, it would be hard to imagine life without the ability to communicate. Yet, because language has always been present—for as long as we can remember—we seldom consider the role and impact of the specific system of symbols that we use on a daily basis. This is true for our native language system, and it is just as true when dealing with people across different language—culture backgrounds.

To understand more fully the role and impact of our native language (L1), as well as that of a second language (L2) during intercultural contact, let us consider how language mediates absolutely everything we do: consider the notion that language makes the anthropoid "human." And consider language as a sort of "original sin" in the sense that language is not really about what it "is" but rather what it "stands for." The markings you are "reading" on this page (and the sounds they suggest), for example, represent something other than simply "markings" on the page or "sounds" in the air. They are the formulaic vehicles we use to transmit meaning from one person to another. Language is a convenient and efficient way to do just that.

Moreover, in addition to representing something other than itself, the words of a language actually represent abstractions from experience, formed into thoughts, shaped by our linguistic system, and conveyed through discrete graphic markings or sound bites, conjured in a stream.

Through these representational symbols, we perform an amazing range of functions: we can specify and designate individual units or concepts (e.g., tears, milk, steam, water, Coke, all manifestations of the category "liquids"), or we can generalize phenomena by employing a single word label to group together even dissimilar things (e.g., "animals" to lump together dogs, cats, porcupines, and cows). In other words, we can distinguish things from each other or group them together at will (and as our language permits). We can also label something as a "whole" entity (e.g., tree) or cite its separate "parts" (e.g., leaves, bark, trunk, roots). All these abilities form part of a linguistic system we learned from infancy and on into childhood, a continuing process throughout life, and one that we seldom give any thought to at all.
Yet, language arises from and shapes our experience, so much so that some say we are less than "human" without language. Consider Victor the Wild Child, found in Aveyron, France, in 1797, as well as accounts of other feral children reported throughout history (Lane 1976). These children were "feral" precisely because they were raised apart from human societies and possessed no language ability. It is clear that language arises from interactions with others in social situations and that communication is indispensable for membership of a culture. The use of symbolic behaviors, then, renders us intelligible and acceptable to those around us. The use of language, in fact, is our ticket to "membership" into a cultural enclave. These examples illustrate how language and culture are intertwined and how the habits and thoughts of its speakers are inseparable from both. No one creates language in isolation.

To pursue this notion further, consider that our entire view of the world is shaped in our minds, aided and influenced by the linguistic system to which we were exposed from birth. Indeed, all languages do just that. Nonetheless, we react with surprise when we learn that other systems function differently. The Inuit of Canada, for example, have created many names for designating varieties of snow. Why should they name and label the generic "snow" in so many ways? It turns out that all speakers in all cultures categorize and classify, segment and specify, whatever is of interest and importance to them. Asians, for example, name and label rice in more ways than English speakers, and *conopyma* in Bolivia do the same with potatoes, a food staple of the Andean region. Americans name and label automobiles with an even greater range of words for makes and models. And Italians, given their penchant for "pasta", employ this word as a superordinate label under which they group a variety of gastronomic experiences, all pasta, yet each instance precisely codified in accordance with shape, method of preparation, and whether stuffed, placed in soup, or baked. As illustrated in Figure 16.1, the result is a hierarchy of terms from general to specific producing nearly 200 possibilities (consequently, speaking Italian requires recognition and classification of phenomena in the Italian way).

But verbal hierarchies exist in all languages (cf. Anglin 1970). What differs is what we organize and classify and how we name and label. In the end, hierarchies are determined by speakers and vary significantly from language to language in accordance with their cultural context. There can be no doubt that language is an important aspect of every culture. Language is that proverbial two-edged sword—it arises from culture and, conversely, it influences and affects culture.

![Pasta hierarchy](image)

*Figure 16.1 A hierarchy of terms from general to specific.*

264
Consider some further mediating aspects: language has the dual effect of both liberating and constraining us. It liberates by permitting us to move figuratively beyond the “here and now” (represented by words such as: am, is, are) and allows us to retrieve past events conceptually (using words such as: was, were, used to) or project into the future (with words such as: going to, will, shall, tomorrow). That is, we can convey a sense of future intent through language (although affirming something linguistically is obviously no assurance that it “will” happen). Through language, we can also “know” (cognitively) even what we do not know (directly) at all or have never experienced (e.g., dinosaurs and Franz Josef of Austria). So, we are also beneficiaries of a collective heritage stored in language, gaining access to the thoughts of generations of speakers over hundreds of years and in diverse places, people we have never even met. All of this is possible vicariously (albeit not experientially) through linguistic symbols and through a process we seldom ponder.

And there is more: language influences our perceptions, but it can also contradict them. In the first case, for example, the child is “told” that an airplane is faster than an elephant and most accept that as fact. However, the child who has peered out the window of an airplane may dispute this fact based on his own experience (not having yet conformed to conventional wisdom). He explains what he “saw”, demonstrating the speed of the airplane with slow movements of his hand. In contrast, he says, elephants run really, really fast, showing this with quick hand motions. He knows this, he says, because he watched them rampage through a village in a Tarzan movie on television. Through language, he is informed or contradicted and, eventually, his direct perceptions are converted into conventional ones.

Through language, we can even bring into creation what may not exist at all. The child describes in detail a “witch” he has seen in his mommey’s closet. Real or fantasy? No matter, it can be spoken about and brought into existence through language. Language even allows us to transcend the boundaries of our very existence (mentally, of course) by questioning and speaking about alternatives to life’s end: after learning about the concept of death, for example, the child expresses his concerns and his yearning: “Si yo voy a morir, ¿por qué yo nací? ¿Por qué nací como nene? ¿Por qué no nací como Dios, o como el sol … como una bola de fuego”? [If I am going to die, why was I born? Why was I born a little child? Why wasn’t I born instead like God, or like the sun … like a ball of fire?] (Fanti 1985: 9).

In summary, every human language is capable of all these things (and more); however, each language does so “differently”: all languages encode the human experience but in varying ways; they segment and classify into different structures and hierarchies, encode differing societal aspects, invent and create what may or may not be and, in the process, each child of each culture is socialized in the way of that culture through language. Conversely, because languages all provide a particular way of facilitating thoughts (within their own cultures), they also prevent one from grasping possibilities inherent and encoded in other systems. In the end, the specific language (our native tongue), which serves us so well throughout our entire life, becomes the biggest impediment to another view of that same world.

2. Language, culture, and worldview: the nexus

We have just explored some ways in which language mirrors culture. It also reflects and affects how we view the world. In short, language, culture, and the worldview they create are all parts of the same phenomenon—one that we take for granted, seldom think about, and fail to recognize; that is, until we come into contact with individuals from a different language—culture—individuals with a different worldview, one unlike our own. And in this moment of cross-cultural contact arise both great challenges and opportunities.
But as each society possesses its own particular view of the world—a Weltanschaung, a cosmovision—how might they differ (the "particulars") and what also might they share (the "universal")? Figure 16.2 illustrates, first of all, how language, culture, and worldview are related.

Three components are depicted: speakers (with their attendant values, beliefs, and attitudes), the speakers' symbol systems (or language), which include linguistic, paralinguistic, and extra-linguistic (i.e., nonverbal) dimensions, and meaning (a semantic component). The linguistic component is made up of the sounds, words, script, grammar, etc.; the paralinguistic of tone, pitch, stress, speed, volume, and affect; and the extralinguistic includes patterns of physical contact (haptics), space (proxemics), gestures and movements (kinesics), eye contact (oculesics), smell (olfactics), and timing in discourse (chronemics, which varies from mono- to polychronic preferences, i.e., speaking one at a time or overlapping during discourse). Finally, meaning resides in our head, but we express and communicate it to others through the use of language symbols. Whereas the worldview of every society arises from combinations of these components, each worldview configures them differently. If one were to layer one worldview over the other, for example, their three components would not coincide. Whereas components are "universal", how they are configured is "particular" to each group.
In the end, each worldview is a cultural-linguistic construct—a way of perceiving, conceptualizing, expressing, and interacting within a sociolinguistic context (represented by the circle). Each context represents a social circumstance—a set of social factors of significance to its speakers, and embedded in their culture, that result in requiring varying styles of speech (e.g., baby talk, polite speech, informal speech, familiar talk, etc.), as appropriate for that context. What is more, sociolinguistic determinants and the resultant speech styles vary from language to language and culture to culture, and these variations are accessible only through knowledge of the language system.

Once again, we see how language reflects and reinforces the speakers' view of the world. In language, we find encoded whatever speakers consider important in their culture. If a society of speakers is concerned with hierarchy, their language reveals and builds in hierarchy (e.g., tu/vous in French or tu/Lei in Italian). If they are concerned with maintaining formal and informal distinctions, this too is reflected in the way they speak (e.g., você/Senhores in Portuguese). If sexism, racism, or classism prevail, these also are reflected and reinforced in language (degrees of which are found in most languages through the ways they refer to gender, other people, and forms for talking up or down the social system). In other words, styles are linguistically expressed and culturally bound.

In summary, language is our most fundamental human paradigm. It reflects and affects all our thoughts, our behavioral patterns, our societal norms, and more. Edward T. Hall expressed this succinctly when he wrote: “Culture is communication” (Hall 1973: 97) and, conversely, I would add, “communication is culture.” But as each language—culture (I prefer a compound word “linguaculture” to assure their interrelatedness and inseparability) configures worldview components differently, many cross-cultural challenges are revealed only through access to the host language. This notion raises important issues related to the topic of this chapter—the nexus between L2 development and intercultural competence.

3. Second language development

Second language “development” refers to both “acquiring” language in naturalistic settings and “learning” in classroom situations, two distinctly different processes often producing differing results. From the previous section, we see that acquiring an L2 naturally exposes one to more than what is normally taught in traditional classrooms. It provides exposure to linguistic, para-, extra-, and sociolinguistic aspects, as well as how L2 symbol systems relate to other components forming its worldview. But whether the L2 is acquired or learned, it initiates a gradual process of entering a new paradigm (more easily done in natural settings than in the artificiality of a classroom). As one gains in proficiency, the more likely one will begin to transcend and transform one’s native system for, as one learns to see things anew, it becomes increasingly difficult to maintain a monocultural vision of the world. Either way, grappling with the host language is key to understanding others “on their own terms.” To convey this point another way, we might ask: is one language (and one culture, one worldview) adequate for dealing across language and culture groups? And, given increasing heterogeneity in most societies plus globalization trends around the world, can a single language be adequate? Finally, how interculturally competent can one be without (at least some) ability in the host tongue?

This said, we must recognize that the task of developing an L2, while formidable, is not impossible. Developing proficiency is not a quick or easy process, but takes considerable time and effort. Yet, the higher the proficiency level achieved, the greater the rewards. Educators, however, often fail to take into account the length of time required to attain varying ability levels. The terms “beginning, intermediate, and advanced” applied to language courses are usually relative to each other and misleading, so that “advanced” may not be very advanced at all in terms of actual performance.
Table 16.1 Time commitments for learning various languages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Average level attained</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Group I: Dutch, French, Italian, Spanish, etc.</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 weeks (240 hours)</td>
<td>1/1+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 weeks (480 hours)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 weeks (720 hours)</td>
<td>2+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Group II: German, Greek, Farsi, Urdu, etc.</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 weeks (480 hours)</td>
<td>1/2+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 weeks (720 hours)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Group III: Bengali, Czech, Hebrew, Russian, etc.</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 weeks (480 hours)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 weeks (720 hours)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Group IV: Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, etc.</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 weeks (480 hours)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 weeks (720 hours)</td>
<td>1+</td>
</tr>
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</table>

A projection chart helps to determine the amount of time required to attain varying levels of functioning in a new language. Excerpts from one chart, compiled originally by the US Foreign Service Institute, indicate the time needed for an average student to develop ability in various other languages (Liškin-Gasparro 1982). In Table 16.1, languages are listed in four groups (according to levels of difficulty for English-speaking students) and the number of weeks and hours required to achieve levels from 0 to 5 (5 represents a native speaker) are indicated.

Although this chart is based on English speakers learning other languages, one might hypothesize that speakers of other languages might take about the same time in reverse to learn English. Of course, this does not take into account cases of historically and linguistically related languages such as Spanish speakers learning Portuguese or German speakers learning Dutch. In any case, the projection chart gives some initial insights about the time commitments required to achieve increasingly higher levels of proficiency in classroom situations.

4. Beyond monolingualism

Today, the importance of developing a second, third, even a fourth language, moving beyond monolingualism to multilingualism, is well established. Whereas psychologists in the early 1900s viewed dual language development as producing potentially negative effects, research in the last half century (and changing world circumstances) underscore the desirability of bilingual/multilingual abilities and point to cognitive and other benefits.

When referring to bilingualism (and multilingualism), we are speaking of degrees of proficiency along a continuum, not absolutes. Many types of bilinguals have been identified by linguists (e.g., simultaneous, sequential, alternating, balanced, active, passive, coordinate, compound, and so forth); however, the hypothetical bilingual as equilingual does not in fact exist. In other words, no individual, no matter the level of proficiency, commands two or more languages in identical ways—to the same degree, on all topics, and in every context (Fantini 2007: 263–77).

In addition to degrees and types of bilinguals, there are also varying profiles of abilities. For example, encountering the following text (or possibly having someone approach you on the street uttering these sounds), what might be your reaction?
Desculpe, o senhor, pode-me ajudar? Eu estou perdido e não posso encontrar o meu hotel.

One reaction might be to skip over the text entirely (or ignore the person seeking your assistance in a strange tongue). Another might be to show interest, feel intrigued, and try to communicate in creative ways. Moving beyond monolingualism, in fact, begins with what I term “incipient” bilingualism. Simply put, this stresses an attitude of willingness to engage with others with no common tongue (not an uncommon situation) and attempting to communicate. In this view, bilingualism begins with attitude, a willingness to engage, even when no skill exists. Such a disposition begins the process and allows one to move forward toward eventually developing the needed skills. The Portuguese text above also underscores another aspect of language—that, although languages communicate, they also excommunicate; they include those who share the system but exclude those who do not. Many focus on language primarily as a tool or academic subject and fail to consider this dual nature of language use.

Aside from bilingual types, degrees, and profiles, varying combinations are also possible when we consider bilingualism +/- biculturalism: one might be bilingual without substantial biculturalism, bicultural without bilingualism, or bilingual and bicultural. The last combination links L2 to second cultural competence, similarly to how they are linked in our native paradigm: we are competent in our native language (L1) and competent in our native culture (C1). Complete entrance into a new language—culture requires much the same—L2 + C2, or LC2 (although only to varying degrees of proficiency in accordance with factors such as exposure, duration, motivation, opportunity, etc.). Clearly, we do not have another lifetime to achieve the same level as in our first system.

In summary, developing LC1 and LC2 assures the most complete type of intercultural communicative competence. Those able to participate in more than one language/culture, in fact, obtain something more. Through this duality, they possess two vantage points. In addition to LC1 and LC2, the individual has a way of comparing and contrasting both LCs—something that no monolingual of either language—culture can ever hope to achieve.

5. Language education and intercultural communication

Given their common and overlapping areas, language education and intercultural communication (ICC) are inextricably linked. The two fields, however, developed quite separately. Whereas language education has existed for centuries, ICC is a relatively new discipline. In fact, ICC was formalized only a little over 50 years ago when US Peace Corps trainers met to compare notes on their evolving practices (cf. Wright et al. 1999: 11–15). Although the field has made considerable progress, intercultural educators and trainers generally leave language concerns to their colleagues in the language field. This separation is apparent in most ICC educational programs and training models, and reflected in the tools used for assessment.

Some interculturalists support this separate approach; others reproach fluent L2 speakers who lack intercultural depth as “fluent fools” (Bennett 1997: 16–21). Indeed, individuals exist who are fluent in other languages, perhaps dilettantes intrigued by linguistic systems, without knowledge of the cultures they represent. And there are also individuals who have entered other cultures to varying degrees without host language knowledge, but it is easier to imagine that entry and acceptance are facilitated and accelerated when one speaks the target language. The ideal proposed here is the person competent in both the language and the culture. Clearly, both L2 and intercultural competence are desirable whether the fields are separate or not.
Although language educators often refer to the cultural dimensions of language, they have been mostly concerned with big "C" culture (i.e., art, music, literature, history, etc.). Conversely, interculturalists, despite their focus on cross-cultural communication, seldom refer to the specific languages through which this communication takes place. Yet, given the role of language in communicating, it seems ironic to focus attention on intercultural interactions and ignore the language that directly mediates every transaction.

Despite increasing globalization, which has caused more people around the world than ever before to have direct and indirect contact with each other, this separatist approach to ICC remains common today. And despite the prevalence of English worldwide, certainly not all cross-cultural communication takes place in English. More commonly, it transpires in one, two, or several languages. We need to rethink how to prepare individuals for intercultural participation using multiple languages. This requires new goals that include the ability of individuals to make themselves understood linguistically as well as to gain acceptance behaviorally. Expanded goals will lead to rethinking about how best to prepare and assist individuals for an intercultural sojourn. Both ICC and language education may develop new models that address common areas, enhance positive redundancies, and reinforce each other. When culture-specific orientation is conducted, the target language would be included. When culture-general orientation is conducted, language learning strategies (and general communicative strategies) would be addressed. In both cases, language is acknowledged as a vital aspect of preparation.

The new paradigm, however, must be based on a more comprehensive and consistent notion of intercultural communicative competence than currently exists in the field. Interculturalists still employ varied terms to refer to the abilities appropriate for successful intercultural contact. In addition to varied terms, they also stress differing aspects of ICC and measure and monitor differing components. These inconsistencies are reflected in the variety of terms and differing portrayals of ICC described in the literature. The concept of ICC needs refinement and greater consensus among practitioners in addition to correcting the inattention to language. The section that follows explores these issues—first, examining ICC and its components, followed by thoughts about measuring and monitoring this complex phenomenon.

6. Cultural and intercultural competence

To understand intercultural competence, it might be useful to think first about cultural communicative competence (or cultural competence, for short). Cultural competence (CC) is something we all have—it is the ability that enables us to be members within our own society. Like language, this is something we do not think much about because we have been culturally competent for as long we can remember. And like language, cultural competence developed through a gradual process of enculturation beginning at birth. Both evolved together and so quickly that, by the age of five, we were already native speakers and members of our society. We communicated in comprehensible and intelligible ways. Our native tongue was an important aspect—not the only aspect—but certainly an indispensable aspect to becoming a member of our society. Without it, we could certainly not have access to everything that we do. In fact, we became intelligible, acceptable members of our societies because of our participation through a specific communication system. We mastered our native language—culture (linguacultural) system and, without realizing it, our native linguaculture system mastered us (a phenomenon sometimes termed "language unawareness").

Given this background, we turn now to our encounter with a second linguaculture, some time later in life. Whereas all children acquire the language (and culture) that surrounds them,
Language, they have history, etc.). Concern, seldom refer to et, given the role of cultural interactions and

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not all adults do likewise when entering a new society. Various factors—social, psychological, biological, and others—account for this. But perhaps the very existence of our native language—culture becomes the biggest impediment to entering a second language—culture.

Yet, intercultural contact (in positive contexts) affords the possibility of entering a new language—culture. This experience can be both powerful and enriching because, through the development of a second linguaculture, we can not only know more, we can also know differently. It permits contact and interaction with representatives of another worldview. It opens up choices, each of which bears consequences and thereby allows us, if we choose, to transform our original understanding of the world, while entering another worldview. Two proverbs circulating among interculturalists capture this thought: "if you want to know about water, don't ask a goldfish" (in other words, a goldfish is unaware of its own medium) and "looking out is looking in" (which is to say that, upon entering a new paradigm, we are able to compare and contrast this with our initial worldview, something not possible without a second vantage point).

Although the notion of cultural communicative competence is easy to grasp, the notion of intercultural communicative competence is not always entirely clear, hence the many labels used with varying meanings. These terms include global competence, international competence, multicultural competence, and so forth. Some writers stress global knowledge, others emphasize sensitivity, and still others point to certain skills. The characterization of ICC synthesized below, however, reveals a phenomenon that is more complex than any one of these views.

Briefly defined, ICC is a complex of abilities needed to perform "effectively" and "appropriately" when interacting with others who are linguistically and culturally different from oneself (Fantini 2006: 12). Whereas "effective" relates to one's own view of one's L2 performance (i.e., an "etic" or outsider view of the host culture), "appropriate" relates to how this performance is perceived by one's hosts (i.e., an "emic" or insider view). Although these perceptions may differ, it is instructive to compare, contrast, and account for them precisely because they arise from differing views of the same cultural situation.

ICC encompasses multiple components: (1) a variety of characteristics; (2) three areas or domains; (3) four dimensions; (4) host language proficiency; and (5) degrees of attainment that evolve through a longitudinal and developmental process. Following are comments about each.

Characteristics

First of all, it is useful to distinguish acquired characteristics (related to one's cultural and situational context) from traits (i.e., innate personal qualities)—a sort of "nurture vs. nature" distinction. This distinction is important for training and educational programs because it poses the question: which abilities form part of an individual's intrinsic personality and which can be developed or modified through training and educational efforts? Commonly cited ICC characteristics include flexibility, humor, patience, openness, interest, curiosity, empathy, tolerance for ambiguity, and suspending judgments, among others.

Three areas or domains

ICC also involves ability in three areas or domains (which, not surprisingly, are just as relevant to success in one's own native L1 as well). These are: (1) the ability to establish and maintain relationships; (2) the ability to communicate with minimal loss or distortion; and (3) the ability to collaborate in order to accomplish something of mutual interest or need.
Figure 16.3 The four dimensions of intercultural communicative competence (ICC)

Four dimensions

The four dimensions of ICC are knowledge, (positive) attitudes/affect, skills, and awareness, shown in Figure 16.3.

Of these dimensions, awareness is central and especially critical to cross-cultural development. It is enhanced through reflection and introspection in which the individual’s LC1 and the LC2 are contrasted and compared. Awareness differs from knowledge in that it is always about the “self” vis-à-vis everything else in the world (other things, other people, other thoughts, etc.), and ultimately helps to clarify what is deepest and most relevant to one’s identity. Awareness is enhanced through developments in knowledge, positive attitudes, and skills, while it in turn also furthers their development.

Host language proficiency

Ability to communicate in the host language enhances ICC development in quantitative and qualitative ways. This was clearly substantiated in an international research project testing
assertions regarding intercultural competence (Fantini 2006: 44–49). One assertion read: “Learning the host language affects ICC development”. After assessing levels of host language proficiency attained by sojourners, they gave testimonies when interviewed about how levels of proficiency affected their intercultural adjustments:

- my ability to communicate in the host language helped in many ways;
- it helped to know how to react in different situations and to overcome ambiguities;
- language was vital to overall intercultural success;
- it would have been impossible to perform my duties without it;
- if I were not capable of communicating, my work would have failed;
- it opened a new world of opportunities and experiences;
- things changed as I gained proficiency in the language;
- it was the main medium for everything, boosting my confidence and allowing integration;
- it enabled me to take part in conversations; I was not excluded;
- it allowed integration and helped me enjoy the experience;
- otherwise, I would have been closed to communication and culture;
- I am grateful that I was able to talk to hosts and co-workers;
- I was able to perform my job and would have been hindered without language;
- although I felt like a child, it would have been impossible to perform without language;
- without language, I would have missed so much;
- without language, it would have been frustrating, boring, and difficult;
- language was key to everything, to communicating, and to understanding the culture.

The sojourners also provided eloquent and insightful written narratives attesting to the significance of host language ability, and this from individuals who were initially monolingual and unsophisticated with foreign languages. Their thoughts derived not from linguistic study but from their own field experiences. They wrote of the importance of host language ability and also of the limitations imposed without it.

In summary, it is clear that increased host language proficiency enhances entry possibilities, whereas lack of proficiency constrains entry, adaptation, and understanding of the host culture. Grappling with another language also fosters the development of alternative communication strategies “on someone else’s terms”, a humbling and challenging process. Lack of an L2—even at a minimal level—constrains one to continue to think about the world and act within it entirely in one’s native system, depriving the individual of one of the most valuable aspects of the intercultural experience.

**Degrees of attainment**

ICC is a process that develops over time, occasionally with moments of stagnation and even regression. Much depends on the strength of one’s individual motivation (instrumental vs. integrative) and attitudes regarding the host culture. Establishing benchmarks can help to monitor and measure one’s progress in this journey, for example:

- Level I: educational traveler—e.g. a participant in a short-term exchange program (1–2 months);
- Level II: sojourner—a participant engaged in extended cultural immersion, e.g., an internship of longer duration (3–9 months);
A.E. Fantini

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Global</th>
<th>Discrete</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Direct</td>
<td>Indirect</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 16.4 Quadrant of multiple assessment strategies*

- Level III: professional—an individual working in intercultural or multicultural contexts, e.g., staff employed in international institutions or organizations;
- Level IV: intercultural/multicultural specialist—a trainer or educator engaged in training, educating, consulting, or advising multinational students.

As the criteria on which intercultural competence is identified, monitored, and assessed are not always clear or consistent, assessment is an especially challenging task. Because it is complex, multiple assessment strategies are required to evaluate this multifaceted phenomenon. Figure 16.4 depicts a chart with varying modes and strategies that produce multiple indicators—global (using performance criteria), discrete (assessing specific items typical of quizzes, examinations, etc.), direct (when attention is focused on the evaluation process itself), and indirect (when attention is focused on an activity that can be used concurrently for assessment purposes).

Whereas many assessment tools exist to aid in assessing ICC, most assess specific components and most omit any reference to language proficiency (cf. Fantini 2009: 456–76). For this reason, a comprehensive tool was developed, known as the Assessment of Intercultural Competence (AIC), to ensure that all ICC components, including language proficiency, are addressed (Fantini 2006: 95–116).

The AIC serves a guide for use before, during, and after an intercultural sojourn, assisting in three ways: (1) establishing and critically examining intercultural objectives; (2) serving as a guide during the intercultural sojourn; and (3) providing a tool for assessment at various stages of the process as well as at the end. As such, the assessment approach is normative, formative, as well as summative. The tool can be used for both the sojourner and the host, looks at both etic and emic perspectives, and produces quantitative and qualitative data. Finally, the tool includes the assessment of language development as an important area of competence, an area omitted in most other forms.

7. Trends in language education and intercultural communication

Language education has made enormous strides over the past 50 years. Breaking tradition with a centuries-old grammar-translation approach, the audiolingual method shifted the focus from practices that emphasized memorization and grammar-translation to newer principles founded on behaviorism. Other ideas quickly ensued, leading to a succession of innovative methods—the Direct Method, Silent Way, CLL (Community Language Learning), Situational Reinforcement, Suggetopedia, and Total Physical Response (TPR), among others. These methods were based increasingly on theories of how language was learned. Although each new method experienced varying degrees of success, today, most educators have moved beyond a single “method” as
attention has shifted from pedagogy (or teaching) to acquisition and learning (i.e., how individuals develop languages, differences in learning styles and strategies, and eventually to the coex of the matter—communicating).

Today, a “communicative approach” is widespread, stressing language proficiency and developing the learner’s ability to perform specific tasks or functions in the second language—culture, e.g., greeting, asking/giving autobiographical information, asking/giving directions, requesting, commanding, negotiating, apologizing, etc. Although this represents an important step toward communicating in a second tongue, many language educators still focus mainly on “linguistic” aspects of communicating and neglect the concomitant interactive and behavioral dimensions required for communicating “appropriately”. There are, however, some hopeful signs of change. A recent issue of the Foreign Language Annals (Spring 2010), for example, contains several articles for language educators that promote language awareness, social interaction, and pragmatic development, all steps in the right direction.

One explicit tool is the process framework, which posits cycles of seven stages for lesson plan development—from presentation of new material to practice, grammar exploration, transmission or use, sociolinguistic exploration, culture exploration, and, finally, intercultural exploration (comparing and contrasting target and native languages/languages) (Fantini 1997: 40–44). Use of this framework ensures that teachers address language, interactions, behaviors, and cultural aspects in each lesson plan cycle before beginning the next.

This said, the implementation of a communicative approach is spotty, and its use varies from institution to institution and country to country. Although many countries are making serious commitments to integrate foreign languages into their curriculum, the quality of language teaching varies dramatically. In recent years, China, Korea, and Chile have mandated the study of English as part of public education. Although Japan has followed this example, its instructional approach is mostly ineffective at present as teachers are inadequately prepared, speak mostly in Japanese, and focus almost entirely on grammar. This attempt contrasts with the European Union’s recent policy designed to make all students minimally bilingual within a few years by beginning English as a second language in the early years and adding a third language a few years later.

In most cases, however, language is still taught without adequate cultural context, although increasing attempts are being made. Several educators are helping to redefine the role of the foreign language teacher. In Europe, an article by Sercu (2006), for example, speaks of “The Foreign Language and Intercultural Competence Teacher: The Acquisition of a New Professional Identity”. This, plus works by Byram et al. (2002), Sercu et al. (2005) and Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor (2006) all address this same issue. In the United States, the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) adopted new standards in 1996, which explicitly incorporate context. These standards include a model labeled the 3 Ps (products, practices, and perspectives), which also expands the teaching paradigm (based on a model developed by Fantini and Fantini 1997: 57–61). ACTFL also produced a series of thirty videos featuring exemplary teachers in language classrooms across the country who demonstrate communicative teaching activities situated in cultural contexts (cf. ACTFL FL Video Series, Pinker 2003). Both are signs of the language field moving in a direction that begins to overlap and reinforce the efforts of intercultural educators and closer to a more integrated model of intercultural competence.

Concurrently, unease about the spread of languages of wider communication as a form of imperialism (especially English, Spanish, and French) seems to have diminished in some quarters. This may be because minority language speakers increasingly choose to learn these languages. In many cases, L2 ability (especially in “world” languages) is viewed as a sign of prestige, opportunity, and modernity, affording advantages to bilingual and multilingual
speakers (Graddol 2006). A recent article, moreover, points out that there are now more French speakers in the world outside of France than in France itself and that speaking French no longer relates only to French culture (Kimmelman 2010). Certainly, the same must be true of English. Esperanto (an auxiliary language developed over 100 years ago) presents a contrasting scenario: it was artificially created and pertains to no specific culture; yet, its spread continues around the world for quite different reasons. In general, Esperantists simply wish to get to know others from many cultures and find Esperanto a vehicle that makes this possible. Curiously, using a language that transcends all cultures makes most Esperantists into a new type of interculturalists themselves.

As with language education, the intercultural field has also spread around the world, and changes in how it is conceptualized and practiced are being witnessed. Assisting intercultural educators and trainers to develop the field is the professional organization, SIETAR (the Society for Intercultural Education, Training, and Research), akin to TESOL, ACTFL, and others. Through conferences and publications, SIETAR provides a venue and network through which interculturalists can share models, methods, and techniques for preparing people to live, study, and work interculturally.

Today, intercultural communication courses are well established in most universities in North America and Europe, and many institutions offer degrees in this field as well (Fantini and Smith 1997: 125–45). Courses and training programs are commonplace for students, business people, and professionals preparing for overseas sojourns. Often, these programs are offered concurrently with language courses. Cross-cultural orientation is provided not only for pre-departure, but also during and upon return from an overseas experience. Orientation efforts are both culture specific and culture general as the context requires; they are content and process oriented, and typically they employ interactive and participatory techniques and offer significant experiential and/or field-based activities.

8. Summary and conclusion

How can the frog know of the sea if it has never left its pond?

Chuang Tzu, fourth century BCE

Intercultural experiences contribute important educational dimensions to human development. Just as entry into one’s initial language–culture paradigm is fundamental for every being to become human, access to a second language can also be quite powerful, opening up further possibilities and expanding upon that original view of the world. As one develops competences, it enhances these possibilities even further. Essential to these competences, however, is the development of proficiency in an L2. In Whorf’s words, “a change in language can transform our appreciation of the Cosmos” (Carroll 1956: vii). Conversely, ignorance of the host tongue seriously constrains participation, impedes the ability to fully grasp alternative ways of being, and leaves us with monocular vision.

Developing ICC competences, however, is not a simple task. Despite modern language teaching approaches that stress communication, developing L2 proficiency requires time, effort, and consistency. In addition, it is not easy for most adults to question, introspect, and reconfigure the view that they hold of the world. For this reason, intercultural sojourns provide arguably one of the most provocative educational experiences imaginable, challenging the sojourner on every level. And although significant intercultural learning may occur without knowledge of the host language, it is qualitatively different. One is dependent on those willing and able to converse with the sojourner in his/her own tongue. Without host language ability, one cannot directly access their thoughts, their culture, their worldview. One can only
learn about these things vicariously and intellectually, but not experientially. L2 completes the whole and provides total access, completely and directly.

Developing intercultural competences with language, then, facilitates full entrance into a new society. It allows participation and interaction in ways otherwise not possible. It extends relationships, evokes new sentiments, weakens stereotypes, and crumbles prejudices. It provokes new questions and stimulates reflection and introspection. And, in the end, it leads toward bilingualism and multiculturalism. And if an L2 serves as a road map to another view of the world, then trilingualism is even better. A third language (and still others) breaks down a potentially polarized view of the world common to bilinguals (Mexicans are this and Americans are that) and promotes the understanding that cultural aspects may be shared by several groups instead of contrasting only two.

Moreover, intercultural experiences are multidimensional: many returnees from a sojourn abroad affirm its provocative and educational nature with comments like: “I learned a lot about my host culture but, surprisingly, I learned even more about myself”. Such statements underscore the two-way nature of intercultural contact—in learning about others, we learn more about ourselves. And in learning about differences, we gain insights into our common humanity, despite the many linguacultures around the globe. For all these reasons, intercultural experiences are typically transformative, resulting in a profound paradigm shift.

Paradigm shifts of this magnitude would be difficult to imagine in a monolingual, monocultural individual, shifts so profound that they produce that “crack in the cosmic egg” that Pearce described over 40 years ago (Pearce 1971), shifts that give new meaning to the challenge from Don Juan when he admonished:

Who the hell do you think you are to say the world is so and so ... just because you think it is so and so? Who gave you the authority? To believe that the world is only as you think it is, is stupid. The world is a strange place ... full of mystery and awe.

_Castaneda (1972: 88)_

To summarize, language is fundamental to participation in society. This is true in our initial cultural experience; it is just as true in our second cultural experience. L2 development must be understood as essential to a full range of intercultural competences, which it is. When speaking about the abilities needed for effective and appropriate cross-cultural interactions, the languages of both parties must form part of the equation. Where both are not included, an imbalance results.

Monolinguals (especially those born to languages of wider communication) must recognize their language as both asset and liability. We cannot allow our languages of influence and power to prevent us from engaging in the dramatic experience that results when we attempt to communicate through other systems. The process must be direct, experiential (as well as "intellectual"), reflective, and introspective, and focus on learning to be and to do in alternative ways. As a result, we will profit maximally from the benefits of an intercultural educational experience—an experience that is unequalled, that changes our approach to the world, and that enriches us for the rest of our lives.

**Related topics**

Learning the language of “the Other”; identity, conflict, and intercultural communication; the intercultural speaker and the acquisition of intercultural/global competence; an intercultural approach to second language education and citizenship; lingua
culture.
Further reading


Todeva, E. and Cenoz, J. (2009) Multiple Realities of Multilingualism, Berlin, Germany: Mouton de Gruyter (a compilation of narratives relating the experiences of sixteen multilingual speakers and the impact on their lives).

References


278