Focusing on the 'I' in ICC

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Main aims of study

1. To assess to what extent participants in General English class (described in earlier talks) appear to have developed their critical language and cultural competences

➢ Do they demonstrate an awareness of the language-culture nexus (how language and culture relate) in a different cultural context?

➢ Do they demonstrate a conscious understanding of the role of (different) culturally based norms, practices, etc. in IC?

➢ Do they demonstrate an ability to use the understanding in practice? (Baker 2012)

2. To explore the significance of psychological factors (namely, participants' positioning in relation to perceived cultural and linguistic norms and practices, and their identity claims) on individuals' communication and ICC in intercultural encounters

➢ What are their socio-psychological orientations (i.e. how do they relate to the sociocultural context)?

➢ How do they construct their identities (i.e. portray themselves) in conversation?

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Conclusions

- Critical cultural and language awareness can usefully be broken down into a) awareness, b) understanding, and c) ability to use culturally-based (linguistic) forms, practices and frames in intercultural encounters

- Understanding of sociocultural meanings of perceived norms is inevitably harder to achieve than awareness of them

- A lack of evidence of ability to use culturally-based forms, etc. *may* be indicative of a lack of understanding, but it may also be indicative of socio-psychological orientation, evident in positioning and identity claims, particularly cultural/national identity claims (e.g. alignment with 'home' culture and against 'local' culture)

- Attempts to develop, and study, ICC in a language learning context should therefore a) attempt to focus on *understanding* of cultural and linguistic cues and b) take account of learners' socio-psychological orientations and identities
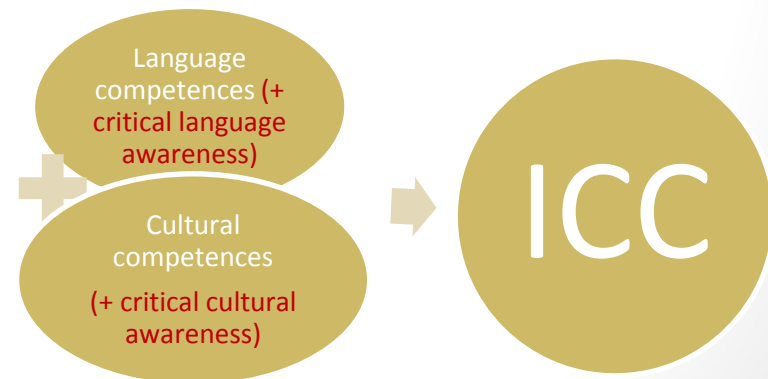
Conceptual framework

Intercultural communication

➢ is both **cultural** (in 'small' and 'big' sense; e.g. Holliday 1999) and **individual** (Martin and Nakayama, 1999: 15)

➢ involves **intergroup factors** (encompassing [inter]cultural norms, values and beliefs, etc.) + **interpersonal factors** (including individual goals, motivation and socio-psychological orientation)

Intercultural Communicative Competence

➢ "It is the analysis and reflection on the **social and psychological dimensions of the language-culture nexus** which [...] create the link between their competences" (Byram 2012: 7)

Language competences (+ critical language awareness)

+

Cultural competences (+ critical cultural awareness)

➔

ICC

Research methods

Data:

- Semi-structured interviews
- (Learner diaries)
- (Ethnographic diary)
- Culture Awareness Task revisited

Analytic approach:

- Discourse analysis
a) use of pronouns and evaluative lexis (e.g. Benwell and Stokoe 2006)
b) descriptions of culturally based forms, practices and frames and examples of how these are used in practice
- Narrative inquiry (e.g. Cortazzi 2001)
a) construction of participants' identities in 'small stories' (Georgakopoulou 2006)
b) evidence of their 'positioning' in relation to perceived linguistic and cultural norms

Socio-psychological orientation(1)

Critical view of perceived norms/values in local sociocultural contexts

➢ A (F, SA, 20s): (discussing her self descriptions) I find it strange that people like to talk about the weather […] I don't engage in talking about the weather […] I just change the topic (laughing)

➢ A (F, SA, 20s): (on observing how nursery staff treat children) the [nursery worker says to a young boy] 'No! Don't touch! She's a little girl and you're a boy/ you're older than her' […] in our culture I will just hold the baby and tell him with anger 'don't do it!'

➢ D (F, J, 20): (on how shop staff are sometimes 'too friendly' in Brighton I went to Asda [and] some [member of staff] was singing and […] said 'hi! How are you?' 'Oh fine'/ I think she was a little strange/ and she asked me 'How was your weekend?' 'Ah good' (laughs) it's strange in Japan

Socio-psychological orientation (2)

Positive view of perceived customs in local sociocultural context

C (F, J, 20): If I'm a customer in a shop Japanese use respect forms but they don't have [that] here so they use words [as if to] friends so it's a little bit strange/ they say [things] like 'have a lovely day' […] so I always talk with Japanese friends and say 'have a lovely day'/ so I want to use [this] in Japan too

Awareness of language-culture nexus in a 'home' context (1)

The effects of religion on male/female communication in Saudi Arabia

A (F, SA, 20s): I think religion shapes our culture [and this affects] the way we communicate with the others for example male and female […] for example my boss [is] a man […] I have just to use formal language [in comparison to] when I talk to the head of department/ she's a woman/ I use just any word [that] comes to mind

B (F, SA, 20s): I think it's related to religion because when we want to speak to foreign men we have to make our voice not like soft […] we have to be clear and strict with men/ I think it's different when I talk to women

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Awareness of the language-culture nexus in a 'home' context (2)

<u>The importance of showing respect when communicating in Japanese</u>

C (F, J, 20): I think we show respect more than other countries to other people/ not just older people [...] and we also use respect forms of speech [...] but people don't use respect forms [here] so I feel a little bit strange about that

D (F, J, 20): we use everywhere respect language [for example when speaking to a] customer and stranger [whilst in Britain] it's sometimes too friendly

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Awareness of the language-culture nexus in a local context

Not talking to others! Observations on the importance of privacy
A (F, SA, 20s): I don't know if the other mothers and fathers will be angry [if I talk to their children at nursery] so I just avoid them […] maybe they just want to keep their privacy? […] I try to be careful and not start any conversation with the others unless they start it/ even my neighbours

The importance of politeness

B (F, SA, 20s): they use very polite words [like] 'please'/'pardon' like when they don't hear the word they say 'pardon?'/ I think it's polite to say that [.] they use [polite words] more than we [do] in our language/ I don't know if this is because of religion

The (over-)familiarity of shop assistants

D (F, J, 20): the examples of shop assistant being 'too friendly' with use of personal/direct questions (see earlier example)

Language use and identities

Practical reasons to be good at English

B (F, SA, 20s): [it's] important [to me to be good at English] because when I go shopping and I want to ask I don't need to ask for explanation every time

Self-deprecating views of English language skills

C (F, J, 20): [I want to] speak to other countries' people so I think it's important to learn English […] I always want to improve my English more and more because [I'm] a little bit embarrassed [if] I make mistakes/ other countries' people […] speak […] better English so I want to be like them (when pressed she said they 'can speak more deeply or more interesting[ly]')

D (F, J, 20): I think now my English is not good so I want to speak more fluently and sometimes I don't understand

Developments in critical awareness? (1)

Responses from Cultural Awareness Task that were revised:

➤ 'We call most people by their first names' (A had thought people would use surnames but has found this not to be the case)

➤ 'We shake hands when we meet someone for the first time' (B notes with surprise that people don't do this in UK; C says some people do shake hands)

➤ 'Young people give up their seat for older people on public transport' (see A and B's experiences on following slide)

No changes at all on the 'what could you say in these situations in the UK' sentences.

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Developments in critical awareness? (2)

Comments of particular interest relate to giving up seats on the bus

A (F, SA, 20s): (quite perplexed that 'old women' regularly offer their seats on the bus to her) I think 'It's rude?' or [they're showing me] respect?/ I can't understand [...] it's strange/ why only the old women?

B (F, SA, 20s): (gave up her seat to an old man and is again perplexed) he said 'Your parents [have brought you up] very well' and then he said 'that's patronising' (laughs) and [...] I translate the word at home/ I said 'why did he say...' because he said 'Your parents learn you very well' and then it's totally negative meaning' [...] so now I go to the back of the bus [...] I don't know why he said this to me

Part.	Awareness (cultural refs; language-culture nexus)	Understanding (cultural refs; lang-culture nexus)	Ability to act on understanding	Positioning	Most apparent identity claims
A (F, SA, 20s)	√ (e.g. communication norms between adults and children)	√ (in home context) **X (local context)**	X (local context; though effort made e.g. not speaking to others unless spoken to)	**Critical of, and perplexed by**, perceived local norms	Cultural/national identity; aligned with 'SA culture'
B (F, SA, 20s)	√ (e.g. importance of polite lang.)	√ (in home context) **X (local context)**	X (local context)	Outside (both home and local norms); **perplexed by** perceived local norms	Student identity (related to me as tutor; looked for approval of language choice)
C (F, J, 20)	√ (e.g. communication norms in shops)	√ (in home, and partially local contexts)	√ ('Have a lovely day')	Relatively positive of perceived local norms	Language learner identity; motivated to communicate 'deeply' with others
D (F, J, 20)	√ (e.g. communication norms in shops	√ (home, and partially local)	**? (chooses not to?)**	Critical of perceived local norms	Cultural/national identity; aligned with 'Japanese culture'

Conclusions

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