Intercultural Communication

‘It is rare in any field to stumble upon a work of genuine careful, critical reading, analytical depth and perspicuous clarity. This is especially true in the field of intercultural studies which largely tackles questions empirically, but too often with an absence of critical rigour. In the main the field of intercultural studies has lacked work which has engaged philosophically with questions of encounter and difference. By eschewing a classic empirical intercultural education model and insisting on an in-depth philosophical reading of key thinkers in the field we have, at long last, the beginnings of a philosophy of intercultural Communication. This is a work, therefore, of considerable importance.’

—Professor Alison Phipps, OBE, UNESCO Chair: Refugee Integration through Languages and the Arts, Professor of Languages and Intercultural Studies, School of Education, University of Glasgow, UK

‘Much has been written about the relationship of the Self to the Other in Intercultural Communication. But until now, no one in the field has taken the step of providing a detailed philosophical account of what that means. With this book, Giuliana Ferri does the field a great service. Beginning with the dialogical ethics of Levinas, Ferri engages with a range of critical thinkers, including Bakhtin, Derrida, Adorno and Spivak, to provide us with an intercultural philosophy for our times. It is essential reading for anyone interested in the theoretical complexities of intercultural dialogue.’

—Dr. John O’Regan, Reader in Applied Linguistics Department of Culture, Communication and Media, UCL Institute of Education, University College London, UK

‘In proposing a new model of intercultural communication, underpinned by different philosophical theories than those currently dominant in the intercultural communication industry, Ferri makes a refreshing, bold and deeply intellectual contribution to the ongoing debate about interculturality in language learning. Ferri deftly, and engagingly, weaves various theoretical strands together – paying homage to scholarly thinking in the social sciences as well as the humanities. This book deserves to be read widely.’

—Dr Gerdi Quist, Senior Lecturer, School of European Languages, Culture & Society, University College London, UK

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This book came about as the result of a doctoral research on the theoretical underpinnings of the field of intercultural communication. Its main purpose is to interrogate three paradigms that have become common currency in intercultural communication, but that are becoming the object of scrutiny in recent critical approaches to the field: the role of tolerance in shaping the relation between self and other, the idea of intercultural awareness as a narrative of reconciliation and final erasure of all differences and finally the notion of intercultural competence. These paradigms are interrogated in a systematic review of the relevant literature, while proposing an alternative conceptualisation of the intercultural, based on the ethics of Levinas. In doing this, the book confronts the issue of future developments in the field, in particular in relation to new methodological perspectives that reflect the contingent and shifting nature of intercultural relations. The book questions the idea of intercultural dialogue as an unproblematised construct, and it focuses on aligning research in this field with current debates on tolerance and multiculturalism, and with the issue of displacement and conflict at a global level. This critical analysis of the field of intercultural communication challenges current instrumentalist approaches to communication in complex and often challenging circumstances in an ever increasing diverse global context, characterised by conflict and fear of the other.

London, UK

Giuliana Ferri
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CHAPTER 1

Intercultural Communication-Current Challenges and Future Directions

Abstract This introductory chapter discusses methodological perspectives in intercultural communication, and in particular the theoretical underpinnings of a philosophical investigation of the field. It provides a synopsis of the book, outlining the main themes discussed in the three chapters. Chapter 2, A Critical Framework for Intercultural Communication, engages with the theoretical presuppositions in the work of leading critical interculturalists. Chapter 3, The Ethics of Interculturality, discusses the relevance of the ethics of Levinas for intercultural communication. Chapter 4, Dwelling or sojourning? Modalities of Interculturality, considers the ethical implications of Levinas’s ethics for the development of a framework that addresses the limitations of current conceptualisations of competence in intercultural communication.

Keywords Critical interculturalism • Essentialism and neo-essentialism • Interculturalism and inter-disciplinarity

Main Themes

This book addresses the wider implications of intercultural communication in the background of widening gaps between self/other along axis of citizenship, inequality and cultural hegemony. Indeed, as events unfold in contemporary global politics, it is perhaps time to take stock and reflect on the nature of intercultural communication as an academic discipline.

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Amidst the large number of methodological and theoretical approaches that characterise this field, this book endeavours to present the ideas of contamination and interdisciplinary connections as invaluable theoretical resources for intercultural researchers in challenging and shifting times. The adoption of the ethics of Levinas has a twofold implication in this book: first, it offers a framework for the dialogic reconceptualisation of interculturalism based on the interaction between self and other, and second it allows the recognition of the other not as an abstract entity but in terms of a corporeal, or embodied self, enmeshed in networks of power and hegemony. Both reposition intercultural communication within a new paradigm that challenges static interpretations of self and other adopted in the models of competence analysed critically in this book.

Chapter 2 illustrates current approaches to critical intercultural communication and it engages with the theoretical presuppositions in the work of leading critical interculturalists. The interdisciplinary approach adopted in this appraisal of critical intercultural frameworks foregrounds the philosophical concerns underpinning research in this field, exemplified in the work of Jensen (2003), Monceri (2003, 2009), Dervin (2011), Holliday (2011, 2013) and Guilherme (2002). The aim of this chapter is to discuss the philosophical underpinnings of these critical intercultural frameworks that are paradigmatic of perspectivism (Nietzsche 1968), social constructivism (Bauman 2000) and emancipatory critique (Horkheimer 1982; Habermas 1984). This critical reading problematizes two of the constructs that are more commonly employed in intercultural communication: the role of tolerance in shaping the relation between self and other, and the idea of intercultural awareness as a narrative of reconciliation and final erasure of all differences. This chapter discusses the categories of class and gender to further develop the distinction established by Holliday (2011) between Western and non-Western cultural worlds, or Centre and Periphery, employed as lenses through which it is possible to analyse the politics of cultural hegemony, in reference to the notion of the privileged subject and the subaltern other (Spivak 1988, 1999, 2004). Building on this critical reading, the chapter argues that narratives of reconciliation of difference and acquisition of awareness follow a Hegelian dialectical model, which accounts for the tendency in intercultural research to search for a final moment of understanding in which all conflicts are resolved. The negative dialectic of Adorno is introduced as the alternative theoretical framework that underpins the conceptualisation of the intercultural as
incompleteness and open-endedness proposed in this book. Following from the discussion in Chap. 2, and adopting the theoretical framework delineated therein, Chap. 3 provides an illustration of the ethics of Levinas and its relevance for intercultural communication. It discusses the notion of subjectivity as it is formulated by Levinas (1969, 1998), which provides an account of the relationship between self and other that informs an ethical conception of intercultural dialogue in the form of presence to one another as corporeal, embodied subjects who co-construct meanings. This chapter rests on an alternative understanding of intercultural interaction that relies on a dialogic idea of communication closely connected to the experiential sphere and the bodily aspects of lived human subjectivity. This largely theoretical chapter is followed by the critique of three models of competence in Chap. 4: Deardorff’s pyramid model (2011a, b), the ICOPROMO project (Glaser et al. 2007) and Phipps’ notion of intercultural competence in terms of dwelling (2007). This chapter considers the ethical implications of Levinas’s reflection on the nature of language and on the relationship between self and other for the development of a framework that addresses the limitations of current conceptualisations of competence in intercultural communication. In particular, Chap. 4 enters in a productive confrontation with Phipps and her notion of intercultural competence as dwelling. Phipps utilises the Heideggerian metaphor of language as a dwelling place and the activity of learning another language as preparation to dwell in a new place. As intended by Phipps, dwelling in a language represents the result of an intercultural experience that provides the language learner with a sense of the fleeting and fragile nature of communication between people who may not share the same cultural perspective. Due to Heidegger’s conservative view of the inextricable bond between culture, language and soil as markers of a shared identity, this chapter proposes an alternative notion of the intercultural in terms of sojourning (Cavell 1996, 2005), as more apt to describe the condition of precarity and ‘messiness’ of intercultural living.

Methodological Considerations

This book reflects the state of flux and theoretical development of intercultural communication research, particularly in the formulation of non-essentialist approaches to the conceptualisation of intercultural understanding and of ethical responsibility in communication. This situation in research is
exemplified by Martin and Nakayama (2010) who argue that this particular field of research has currently not achieved a unified methodological approach. For this reason, intercultural communication remains open to new theoretical interventions, particularly in redefining the role of culture in underpinning the dynamics of intercultural interaction:

After ten years, revisiting the contemporary terrain of Intercultural communication seems warranted. The field has exploded in many different directions that have opened up the very notion of ‘intercultural’ communication. In some ways, the term itself, ‘intercultural’, tends to presume the interaction between discrete and different cultures. (...) Ten years later, the very problem of conceptualising ‘intercultural communication’ remains as vibrant and relevant as ever. (Martin and Nakayama 2010, p. 59)

Orbe (2007) summarises the limitations of traditional empirical methodological frameworks in capturing the complexity entailed in intercultural interaction as:

- **Eurocentric bias.** This bias is evident in the discourse of skills and competences in communication that emphasises conflict management as the principal element in interaction between self and other.
- **Essentialising generalizations.** The other is simplified according to parameters such as culture, ethnicity or nationality.
- **Assumptions of difference.** Difference is attributed to contrasting cultural practices.
- **Focus on micro-level practices.** Research is based primarily on everyday communicative practices in small group situations.

It is suggested in this book that a methodological approach for intercultural communication should include the following:

- To counteract assumptions of difference by redefining the relationship between self and other within an ethical frame. This ethical framework is based on the Levinasian distinction between the two modes of discourse of the *saying* and the *said*.
- To confront Eurocentric bias and essentialism with a critique of communicative competence.
- To focus on macro-level practices, examining how interaction is shaped by larger social, political and economic systems in both
intra- and inter-cultural contexts, creating power asymmetries between self and other.

These aims reflect the methodological difficulty of dealing with the complexity of the world in which interactions take place. In accounting for this tendency to enclose complexity within methodological frameworks, which derive from paradigms set in Western scientific metaphysical tradition, Law (2004) suggests the widening of the notion of methodology in order to include uncertainty and singularity. Law describes methodology as a process of delimiting the boundaries between what is made manifest in research and those aspects that are made absent, or excluded, in the act of defining a field of investigation. The idea that presence and absence are mutually constitutive originates in the critique of metaphysics initiated by Adorno (1973, 2008) and Benjamin (1999), which focused on the attempt to retrieve the marginal aspects of existence that have been excluded from philosophical investigation. According to their critique of metaphysical tradition, one of the principal aspects entailed in the act of delineating a concept consists in deciding what is omitted, in virtue of being marginal and non-essential to the definition of its identity. In this process of exclusion, thinking becomes organised in a series of dichotomies: on the one side, the positive aspects that constitute the essence of a concept, and on the other, the negative and the marginal characteristics that are excluded from its definition. Indeed, this practice creates a uniform system of truth ordered according to a series of oppositions, which marginalise the particularity of the concrete and singular aspects of individuals and of existence in general. In other words, the process of delineating an area of investigation entails the creation of an absence. This absence remains as the hidden and repressed aspect of the observed reality, and it is made ‘other’ in the constitution of an object of knowledge,

All that is being said is that matters are relational: what is being made and gathered is in a mediated relation with whatever is absent, manifesting a part while Othering most of it. (Law 2004, p. 146)

This book reflects this dialectic between presence and absence in the field of intercultural communication with its critique of intercultural competence in which the other is considered from the perspective of the self. In the idea of communicative competence critiqued in Chap. 4, it is argued
that the voice of the other is absent, meaning that communication is contemplated from the perspective of the self and not from the standpoint of interaction, in which self and other are reciprocal.

Another critical aspect regarding methodology is that of interdisciplinarity when researching intercultural communication. Being interdisciplinary in nature, the field of intercultural communication encompasses three main disciplines, namely, psychology, anthropology and linguistics. Psychology analyses the role of human cognition in identifying the patterns of behaviour of members of different cultures. Anthropology provides the tools to recognise cultural patterns and non-verbal communication. Linguistics examines the relation between language and cultural systems (Flammia and Sadri 2011). However, within these disciplinary fields intercultural communication still relies on neat classifications of cultural difference and unquestioned definitions of otherness while some of the most complex and contested challenges gripping contemporary multicultural societies are left unexamined. It is argued in this book that an ethical approach to intercultural communication should venture outside these disciplinary fields and engage in the debates that are most poignant in the current climate of hostility towards ‘the other’: refugees and asylum seekers, ethnic minorities, immigrants, women, the disabled, and LGBTQI. In dealing with understanding across cultures and perceptions of self and other, intercultural communication is best placed to intervene in debates that are relevant in multicultural societies, challenging unproblematised notions of otherness and examining critically the idea of relativism and of tolerance of different cultural practices when these present ethical dilemmas or aporias (O’Regan and MacDonald 2007). In this regard, in terms of integrating an ethical perspective to the field of intercultural communication, the possibilities offered by an interdisciplinary approach have not been exhausted. As an illustration of this point, Youngblood (2007) discusses inter-disciplinarity in terms of problem-oriented critical thinking that focuses on process rather than being limited to a specific disciplinary domain. This translates as the process of selecting analytical tools from a relevant discipline in order to advance solutions and promote deeper understanding. Examples of this approach are documented in other fields of research in which the messiness and precariousness of communication are evident, as in the presence of a dominant other in situations of clear inequality— for example in ethnographic research on asylum seekers in the Belgian legal system (Maryns and Blommaert 2002; Maryns 2006) and research on grassroots literacy with African migrants and asylum seekers in
Belgium (Blommaert 2001, 2004). Similarly, Phipps (2014) brings examples from the field of Peace and Security Studies (e.g. Lederach 2003; Schirch 2004), which are able to offer frameworks and practices which may enable language and intercultural studies to move away from its insistence on Intercultural Dialogue and offer ways of working with acknowledged and inevitable identity loss and precarity. (Phipps 2014, p. 120)

Phipps discusses this sense of precarity in the context of linguistic solidarity, which designates the effort of ‘intercultural listeners’ (2012, p. 587) to accommodate one’s own language in the endeavour of communication, particularly when confronted with the traumatic experiences of asylum seekers using a foreign language under difficult circumstances. In this sense, research in intercultural communication is faced with the challenge to address openly issues of inequality and conflict, shifting from the predominant focus on business relations, intercultural training and language learning in higher education, to the development of viable alternative theoretical perspectives that redefine the ethical significance of intercultural dialogue, a concept which “is challenged profoundly by the insecurities and precarities which now affect large numbers of people in the world” (Phipps 2014, p. 115). Indeed, Phipps’ reflection resonates with the ethical scope of this book, and invites an investigation into the possibility of including an ethics of communication in intercultural research. This book answers this call by delineating a Levinasian framework to address issues of hegemonic discourses and power imbalance that marginalise and otherise transversely across gender, sexuality, class, race, ethnicity, religion, nationality and physical disability. An example of research that advocates this transversality of interests is Chávez’s (2013) argument in favour of the inclusion of queer and trans theories in intercultural communication, for example mapping the trans-national and trans-cultural circulation of notions of gayness and queerness. Chávez identifies a number of points of convergence between queer and trans studies and the critical turn in intercultural communication, particularly the focus on gender, class and race in order to question not only normative modes of identity, but also modes of social and economic organization within the logic of the commodification of difference in political and economic neo-liberalism (see Kawai 2009 and the commodification of cultural difference in tourism, Shepherd 2002; Jack and Phipps 2005).
SELF AND OTHER, A QUESTION OF DIFFERENCE?

Thinking about self and other in intercultural communication entails engaging with and thinking about difference. Is difference the gap between self and other that needs to be bridged through intercultural awareness and the exercise of tolerance, or does difference connote uniqueness, immanence and embodiment in the relation self/other? Warren’s (2008) conceptualisation of difference is of great interest in clarifying this distinction. According to Warren, communication studies limit the understanding of difference to that of representing an opposition to a normative construct. This means that difference is perceived in terms of a negative, “something that hurts or constrains us” (Warren 2008, p. 295), whether it is construed in terms of racial, ethnic, gendered or linguistic difference. What is argued in this book is that accentuating the role of cultural difference creates essentialist competency models that help individuals navigate the ‘strangeness’ of the other. This simplified notion of difference appears in the neo-essentialist attribution of cultural difference to the other, understood in terms of a problem that can be fixed through the discovery of commonalities between cultural traditions, which allow people to communicate interculturally, or through the practice of cultural tolerance of the other as ‘different from us’. In this instance, the focus on difference is apolitical, abstracted from the contextual factors that attribute cultural difference as a trait of the other. Furthermore, this etiolated notion of difference is present in the contraposition between marginal cultural realities versus hegemonic cultural ideologies (Warren 2001), in which the marginal becomes essentialised and idealized. These factors simplify the rich theoretical ramifications that a more developed conceptualization of difference would bring forward in the field of communication. Rather than being relegated to representing a negative moment or reduced to a binary distinction between marginal and hegemonic cultural realities, difference can become a sign of embodiment, immanence and uniqueness, or particularity, as Warren explains:

My first major discovery, as a thinker about culture, is that difference need not be coded in the negative, as an opposition (i.e., I’m different from you), but could be seen as an affirmation (i.e., I’m unique and so are you). In many ways, this is an elementary idea: difference is the inevitable thread that makes us who we are and that can be a beautiful thing. This is not the same as saying that we are all different and therefore all the same; rather, it is to
say that there is variability within presumed categories of people and if we want to understand how power works we need to invest careful attention to particularity and avoid the trappings of binary logics. (Warren 2008, p. 295)

This positive affirmation of difference in intercultural communication advocated in this book assumes the outlines of the concrete other as it is conceptualized in Levinasian ethics, through the ideas of immanence and bodily presence in Chaps. 3 and 4.

**Philosophical Inquiry in Intercultural Communication**

Philosophical inquiry is adopted in this book as a means to “unravel conceptual knots” (Blake et al. 2003, p. 16) through a problematizing perspective, which is influenced by the contribution of Pennycook (2001) in the field of applied linguistics. In his work, problematizing practice, or ‘the restive problematization of the given’ (Pennycook 2001, p. 107), redefines the contributions of poststructuralist, postmodernist and postcolonial thought positioning itself in a relation to knowledge that questions assumptions, concepts and categories as the product of the relationship between power and knowledge,

Poststructuralism (and postmodernism) becomes a skepticism about common assumptions, a questioning of givens, (…). One strategy by which this is sometimes achieved is through pluralisation: Knowledge (capitalisation in the original) becomes knowledges, subjectivity becomes subjectivities. Beyond the often obscure discussion of the sign, subjectivity, and discourse, poststructural-ism becomes a way of thinking, a tendency to always question given categories (human nature, universalism, the individual, culture, language, knowledge) and to try to explore how these categories are not so much real qualities of the world but are the products of particular cultural and historical ways of thinking. (Pennycook 2001, p. 107)

Here Pennycook refers to one of the tenets of post-structuralist thinking, namely the relation between knowledge and power. For Foucault (2010), power is embodied in social practices and in discourses that create regimes of truth, meaning the organisation of accepted forms of knowledge and the division between what is true and false. According to Lyotard (1984) technological advancement transforms knowledge from the old concept of
development of the individual mind to a commodity at the service of industrial, military and political strategies. Problematizing practice, in this context, recognises the power relations that are embedded in knowledge and seeks to articulate the ways in which they are reproduced in a particular field of investigation, in the specific, intercultural communication. Dean (1994) distinguishes between three forms of intellectual practice. The first model is progressivist theory and the high modernist ideal of the Enlightenment, characterised by the ideal of progress and technological advancement. This model adopts the language of natural science to deduce causal explanations that are applied to the social field. The second form of theory is represented by critical theory, which critiques modernist reason as presenting a technocratic vision of rational advancement. In this model, reason is embedded in social and cultural practices that reposition rational advancement in terms of emancipation. Finally, the third model is represented by problematizing practice, “the disturbance of narratives of both progress and reconciliation” (Dean 1994, p. 4). This form of theory is rooted in the practice of formulating questions, rather than seeking a solution based on either an idea of progress or of emancipation. In the analysis of the constitution of the field of knowledge of intercultural communication, it is thus important to differentiate between a critique from the position of a legislating subject “passing judgement on a deficient reality” (Dean 1994, p. 119) and the problematization of assumptions that become taken for granted in a discursive practice. Similarly, Koetting and Malisa (2004) identify three aims of philosophical inquiry: to theorise, to analyse and to critique with an approach that is interpretive (interest in understanding) or critical (interest in emancipation). The process of philosophical inquiry is thus summarised: an initial conceptual analysis that situates the issue under investigation in the context of a philosophical tradition, and the examination of its epistemological and axiological assumptions that is either interpretive or critical. Another significant distinction is the one outlined by Biesta (2001, 2009) between critical dogmatism, transcendental critique and deconstruction, which offers a starting point from which to articulate a problematization of intercultural communication. According to Biesta, critical dogmatism consists in examining a situation critically, adopting a specific criterion of evaluation. One example is the criterion of emancipation, adopted in critical pedagogy to evaluate existing educational systems. However, Biesta argues that this form of critique is dogmatic because it “derives its right to be critical from the truth of the criterion” (2009, p. 84), meaning that the criterion itself (i.e. emancipation...
tion) is not evaluated critically. Transcendental critique begins with the articulation of the conditions of possibility of knowledge initiated by Kant with his Critiques (1987, 2004, 2007), which relied on the presupposition of the existence of the Cartesian cogito, the ‘I think’, meaning a universal legislating subject. In the context of the Frankfurt School, Habermas (1984, 1987) grounds transcendental critique in the philosophy of language, through the notion of communicative ethics and its model of rationality based on mutual understanding and consensual action. From this perspective, Derrida’s problematization of the tenets of Habermasian communicative action, particularly the concept of an ideal speech situation, introduces a radical approach to the notion of critique, through the practice of deconstruction. The term deconstruction (Derrida 1997) differs from critical analysis since its aim does not reside in uncovering a stable ground in order to establish a critical distance from a clearly defined object of knowledge. Rather, deconstruction puts into question the possibility of a stable ground and the unity of objects of knowledge, and focuses instead on the instability of meanings and of metaphysical oppositions (Wortham 2010). The focus on non-reciprocity, asymmetry and faults in mutual recognition (Bernstein 2006; Critchley 2006) directs the practice of deconstruction towards the singularity of the other and the play of differences, or “differance”, between signs and signifiers that is constitutive of language (Derrida 1984, 1997). This practice allows to deconstruct relations and assumptions rooted in the “philosophy, history, culture and politics of the Western tradition” (Wortham 2010, p. 37), and as such it constitutes the basis of problematizing practice as it is adopted in this book.

**The Role of Levinasian Ethics in Problematizing Intercultural Communication**

The philosophy of Levinas is concerned primarily with ethics, and particularly with the relation between self and other. For Levinas, ethics is thinking about the other, and this preoccupation with otherness, or alterity, represents the principal theme around which his reflection on the nature of thinking, language and knowledge is organized. According to Levinasian ethics, the certainties held by the self are destabilised upon encountering the other,
For the ethical relationship which subtends discourse is not a species of consciousness whose ray emanates from the I; it puts the I in question. This putting in question emanates from the other. (Levinas 1969, p. 195)

A dialogic understanding of intercultural encounters is underpinned by this particular aspect of Levinasian ethics and more specifically on two distinct types of relation between self and other. In the first modality, the relation with the other happens through cultural categories, which fix the encounter within parameters that have been defined in advance, prior to the encounter. In the second modality, the self is exposed to the other in an ethical relation. To express the complex character of otherness embedded in this ethical relation, Levinas distinguishes between two terms: autrui (the other person) and autre (otherness, or alterity). The accepted convention in translation is to capitalise the word Other in reference to autrui, although this book adopts Cohen’s argument that the distinction between autrui and autre is not always consistent in the original text,

Still, it must be said, Levinas often uses autre where he could very well have used autrui; one should avoid making a fetish of this distinction and pay attention to context. (Cohen 1987, p. viii)

Therefore, in this book the word other is employed without capitalisation in reference to autrui, the other person, whilst the word otherness, or alterity, is employed in reference to autre. The adoption of this aspect of Levinasian ethics has a twofold implication: first, it offers a framework for the dialogic reconceptualisation of interculturalism, and second it allows the recognition of the other not as an abstract entity but in terms of a corporeal, or embodied, self.

CONCLUSION

Repositioning intercultural communication practice within a new paradigm entails a recognition of the impossibility to achieve a formula to fix communication, and the focus on Levinasian ethics assumes risk taking and open ended dialogue as guides for intercultural praxis. Thus, philosophical reflection delineates a conception of subjectivity based on dialogism and defined by interaction with the other according to Levinasian ethics. The philosophical standpoint adopted in this book situates intercultural encounters within the duality of agency and structure in relation
to power asymmetries between self and other, emphasising their imma-
nent and embodied relation. It is argued in this book that an analysis of
the theoretical tenets upon which intercultural communication builds its
interpretive framework, as well as a more critical approach to the ideas of
relativism and tolerance, should become more visible in research in this
field. In this sense, this book seeks to promote interdisciplinary connec-
tions to promote dialogue and critical engagement with wider issues
beyond the micro-analysis of individual intercultural learning journeys.

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CHAPTER 2

A Critical Framework for Intercultural Communication

Abstract This chapter illustrates current approaches to critical intercultural communication and it engages with the theoretical presuppositions in the work of leading critical interculturalists. The aim of this chapter is to discuss the philosophical underpinnings of these critical intercultural frameworks that are paradigmatic of perspectivism, social constructivism and emancipatory critique. This critical reading problematizes two of the constructs that are more commonly employed in intercultural communication: the role of tolerance in shaping the relation between self and other, and the idea of intercultural awareness as a narrative of reconciliation and final erasure of all differences.

Keywords Critical intercultural citizenship • Critical cultural awareness • Critical cosmopolitan potential • Subalternity and interculturalism • Hegelian dialectics and intercultural consciousness • Negative dialectics and interculturalism

INTRODUCTION

While intercultural communication is theorised from a number of ontological and epistemological positions, the possibility of defining its contents, aims and characteristics as an object of knowledge and as an object of human experience remains at the centre of attempts to delineate the often blurred contours of this field. Critical approaches to intercultural
communication in particular are concerned with a theoretical preoccupa-
tion that seeks to establish the ontological status of the intercultural self as 
a result of the relation between the self and a cultural other in interaction. 
Is it indeed conceivable to attribute an ontological change to the self, a 
change in being, following an intercultural experience? As intercultural 
encounters are viewed in terms of situated, dynamic and shifting relations, 
critical interculturalism searches for theoretical positions that foreground 
the ethical aspect of these encounters, whilst incorporating issues relating 
to unequal power relations and the relationship between structure and 
agency. From this perspective, critical intercultural communication 
engages chiefly with the partial, contested and situated nature of language 
and the often difficult negotiation of meaning in intercultural encounters. 
This aspect becomes most visible in situations where there is a power 
imbalance (Blommaert 1991; Nakayama and Halualani 2010; Holliday 
2011), in the context of language learning (Byram and Risager 1999), liv-
ing in a foreign country (Holliday 2010; Jackson 2011) and tourism 
(Phipps 2007). What emerges is an increasing attention towards issues of 
inequality, asymmetries and power relations, which are discussed in this 
chapter through a close reading of five critical intercultural frameworks 
that are paradigmatic of the current status of critical approaches to inter-
culturality: the perspectivism of Jensen (2003) and Monceri (2003, 2009), 
the liquid interculturality of Dervin (2011), and the emancipatory stance 

CULTURE ‘UNDER ERASURE’

In the context of language acquisition for tourism purposes, Phipps 
describes the experience of the language learner confronted with the chal-
lenging task of negotiating meaning in the course of intercultural interac-
tion. Warning against the idea of the acquisition of intercultural competences as a quick fix to resolving conflict and misunderstanding, 
Phipps emphasises instead the complexity of communication and ‘the mess 
of human relatedness in languages’ (Phipps 2007, p. 26), referring to the 
Heideggerian notion of language as an expression of our dwelling in the 
world. This existential dimension is becoming increasingly prominent in 
intercultural research, bringing to the surface the endeavour, and often 
the failure, to negotiate meaning that characterises human communica-
tion, both inter- and intra-cultural. In this regard, Phipps (2013) interro-
gates her own role as a researcher endeavouring to give an account of
herself in the face of the ethical challenges entailed in researching in multilingual contexts.

Regarding the focus on cultural difference in the analysis of communication in intercultural contexts, Koole and ten Thije (2001) argue that, although justified from an ethnographic perspective, this focus leads researchers to overlook other characteristics of discourse, such as power relations between dominant and non-dominant groups, resulting in analytical stereotyping and overgeneralizations. Thus, the a priori reliance on cultural difference in the analysis of intercultural interactions highlighted by Blommaert (1991) can be contrasted with other approaches that emphasise power relations and the societal institutions within which the interactions take place, through a situational and discursive approach (e.g. Gumperz 1982; Scollon and Scollon 1995; Koole and ten Thije 2001).

Here, the Bakhtinian idea that language is inhabited by centripetal and centrifugal forces provides an apt reminder that language is the site of a struggle between the system of linguistic norms that form the idea of a unitary language and the reality of heteroglossia. According to Bakhtin, centripetal forces embody the idea of a unitary language which operates in the midst of heteroglossia, or the stratification of language in dialects. Here Bakhtin refers particularly to dialects as socio-ideological expressions, languages that belong to social groups and that ensure the constant development and vitality of language itself, “the uninterrupted processes of decentralization and disunification” (Bakhtin 2006, p. 272). Each individual utterance represents a recognisable speech act in a defined system of rules but at the same time it is placed in the living and unique context in which it is uttered. Therefore, the idea of culture becomes problematic when used as an explanatory tool for behaviour or when talk around cultural belonging is taken at face value, without interrogating the context of the interaction and the role of the researcher in eliciting, recording and interpreting empirical data. However, can interculturalists avoid using this much maligned term lest they incur the danger of being labelled essentialist, the ultimate capital sin in critical interculturalism? What else is available to describe intercultural encounters? In this sense, it is mandatory to recognise one’s own ‘metaphysical complicity’ (Derrida 2010, p. 235) with the language adopted in intercultural communication, particularly with the use of the word culture. However, it is possible to follow Derrida in the idea that the movement of difference between sign and signifier expresses the impossibility to inscribe meaning in a totality, making it possible to place the word culture under erasure: in calling a word into
question I also recognise the fact that no other word is available (Derrida 1997; Bradley 2008). When placing temporarily the term culture under erasure, the word can be seen in terms of styling (Coupland 2007), meaning the shaping of social meanings through the use of semiotic resources. This understanding is opposed to an essentialist interpretation that turns culture into a natural entity inscribed within national boundaries, which Street (1993) attributes to the use of nominalisation imported from scientific discourse. This notion of culture is opposed to the idea of culture as a verb, something that is enacted, implying that meanings are contingent and unstable, constantly negotiated in everyday life and that culture is a discursive construction built in interaction. Furthermore, cultural discourses are not neutral products but inhabit social spaces embedded in power relationships and can be used to disguise material inequalities, for example attributing underachievement in education to culture rather than addressing its underlying socio-economic dimension (Phillips 2007). For this reason, Street suggests the use of the notion of hegemony, which Gramsci (2007) employed to designate the control exercised throughout society by a dominant group. Hegemony describes ‘patterns and constraints of social life at the same time as recognising in a post-modern sense their multivocal and contradictory character’ (Street 1993, p. 37). In this sense, the word hegemony is best fit to highlight the interrelationship between the top down imposition of dominant discourses and the dynamic complex of forces that reproduce and transform them. Therefore, the word culture will be used hereafter according to this last definition: in terms of a constant struggle between the instability of discursive patterns of interaction and the habit of inscribing these within a totality.

**Perspectivist Intercultural Communication**

Jensen (2003) identifies two strands of intercultural communication: a functionalist approach focused on cultural difference and a post-structuralist approach. The latter examines communication from the perspective of the individual participants and highlights the process of interaction from their respective interpretations. Jensen employs Yoshikawa’s (1987) double swing model based on the idea that communication is an infinite process in the course of which the participants undergo a transformation. In this model participants are considered to act simultaneously as both addressee and addressee, after Buber’s (2004) I-Thou dialogic relationship and the idea of interdependence in the...
dualism of *yin* and *yang* in Taoist teaching (Chen 2008). Through intercultural interaction, self and other are able to develop a *dynamic in-betweenness* (Yoshikawa 1987), meaning the ability to inhabit different identities. Jensen’s model is developed from a post-structuralist approach that emphasises the fact that interactants are engaged in an ongoing process that is based on ‘positions of experience’, or in other words on subjective, individual perspectives. Jensen bases this idea on the horizon of experience (Gadamer 1976) as a hermeneutical tool to interpret intercultural encounters not only in terms of cultural difference, but taking into account the horizon, meaning the social spaces inhabited by the participants. This positioning, argues Jensen, is constructed discursively during interaction but it is at the same time anchored in social structures, which delimit the sphere of action of the individual.

Monceri (2003, 2009) adopts a similar perspectivism, beginning with a critique of Western rationality. Similarly to Yoshikawa, Monceri (2003) argues that Western rationality is founded on the idea of a unique and indivisible self, able to comprehend reality in its essential elements. Monceri challenges this dichotomy between the knowing subject and the objects of knowledge adopting the notion of will to power (Nietzsche 1968). Accepting the impossibility to determine a stable and universal standpoint from which the self would be able to formulate claims of truth about the world, with the idea of perspectivism Nietzsche represents knowledge as a will to power that orders the flux of reality from an individual perspective. Thus, the self strives to impose order on reality creating an unchangeable set of identities, in order to establish an appearance of stability to the flux of phenomena in the empirical world, which is ever changing and shifting. According to Monceri, this process becomes apparent in the presence of an intercultural encounter, when the definite sense of identity of the self, built upon the idea of the rational apprehension of the real, is challenged by the encounter with an unknown other who eludes the categories imposed by self. This means that, from the standpoint of perspectivism, the categories of self and other become problematic, because intercultural encounters demonstrate that the reality upon which these categories are based changes depending on context and on perspective. In this sense, according to perspectivism the intercultural self is not transcultured, meaning the end point of a process of acculturation, but it is transculturing, meaning that the self is in a constant state of change and becoming. This state of flux is transferred to the theory of
intercultural communication by problematizing the search for consensus and highlighting the precarity of communication,

What perspectivism teaches us is that there is no way out to find only one theory of intercultural communication able to solve all eventual misunderstandings, and that the only possibility left is to elaborate tentative working hypothesis starting from the consideration of concrete interactions between individuals, since individuals and not cultures are the proper partners of any communication process. (Monceri 2003, p. 111)

Therefore, Monceri claims that the self is processual, which entails that there are no stable or natural identities (for example sexual or gender based identities), and thus only temporary selves that arise from interaction with others and with society at large,

Identity, in its turn, points to the infinite punctual selves in which we are compelled to stop the flux of becoming in order to interact with one another, and particularly to meet the requests for identification on the part of our social and cultural institutions. (Monceri 2009, p. 52)

To this, Monceri adds the dimension of power relations that attempt to dispel the chaos of becoming and replace it with “the (apparent) order of being” (ibid.). In this conception of the transculturing self, power represents a pervasive force that fixes identity, rendering possible the identification of the self in everyday interactions. However, in doing so, the flux of reality is interrupted and the self is congealed within an identity, instead of continuing the process of transformation, or metamorphosis.

With the notion of the transculturing self, Monceri provides a complex description of intercultural communication based on the provisional and contextual negotiation of meaning in which the self plays an active role as a shifting and hybrid identity. The state of constant becoming of the transculturing self recalls the notion of nomadic subjectivity (Deleuze and Guattari 1999), stemming from Nietzsche’s critique of the ability of the transcendental subject to confer unity to the empirical world. This notion of a nomadic subjectivity that destabilizes fixed identities in order to affirm difference and becoming allows a shift in the conceptualisation of difference framed within the context of cultural belonging to difference as a performative and creative act (Warren 2008). However, in counteracting essentialist reifications of culture as an insurmountable structure, meaning
that culture is regarded as a construct independent of human activity, this radical form of subjectivity falls under the opposing category of voluntarism (Bhaskar 1998), according to which society is entirely the product of human action. According to Bhaskar we are ‘thrown’ into a pre-existing social context, and as a consequence there exists a duality in which individuals both reproduce (unconscious production) and occasionally transform (conscious production) society (Bhaskar 1998, p. 35). For Bhaskar there are two errors in the conceptualisation of the relation between human agency and society: one is the error of reification, according to which society exists independently of human activity and the other is the error of voluntarism, according to which society is the product of human action. It is possible to identify the two errors in both essentialist intercultural communication, with cultural categories that determine individual behaviour, and in perspectivist models that emphasise the idea of a shifting identity over social determinations.

Society must be regarded as an ensemble of structures, practices and conventions which individuals reproduce or transform, but which would not exist unless they did so. (Bhaskar 1998, p. 36)

From this perspective, it is important to articulate more clearly the ways in which these power relations and societal structures are manifested in intercultural encounters.

**POST-MODERNISM AND THE POLITICS OF INTERCULTURALLITY**

Dervin proposes a conception of interculturalism based on the intersubjective and relational construction of meaning in interaction. Liquid interculturalism (Dervin 2011) is presented as an alternative to solid interculturality, which is characterised by its reliance on cultural categorisation, whereas in the liquid model culture is a co-construction that is acted by interactants during communication. The two categories-solid and liquid, are established by Bauman (2000) with a contrast between twentieth century modernity and twenty-first century contemporary modernity: the first described as solid, heavy, condensed and systemic, with an inherent tendency towards totalitarianism and the latter as liquid, devoid of historical finality, characterized by fragmentation and the privatization of individual existence. Bauman illustrates this contrast with a reflection on the shift from modernist emancipatory critical thinking to an
inward turn towards reflective critique in contemporary, liquid modernity.

The modernizing impulse, in any of its renditions, means the compulsive critique of reality. Privatization of the impulse means compulsive self-critique born of perpetual self-disaffection: being an individual de jure means having no one to blame for one’s own misery, seeking the causes of one’s own defeats nowhere except in one’s own indolence and sloth, and looking for no remedies other than trying harder and harder still. (Bauman 2000, p. 38)

In liquid modernity the individual performs his/her own sense of identity, and is responsible for the outcomes of this performance, a consequence of the critical impulse having been transformed into a self-reflective endeavour. Liquid modernity is represented as the era of inconsequential time, meaning that temporality is reduced to instantaneity, in which spatial distances can be covered with the speed of electronic signals. For Bauman, the ability to traverse different time/spaces with ease signals the ultimate sign of privilege in contemporary liquid modernity.

In the appropriation of liquid modernity as a constructivist model of interculturality in which culture is constantly negotiated and performed by interactants in communication, Dervin substitutes the notion of culture, which he regards a solid concept, with that of space/time, indicating the fluidity of liquid modernity. The liquid intercultural approach is thus summarised,

In other words, researchers, who wish to take a critical and ‘liquid’ stance towards intercultural discourses, shouldn’t be interested in the question ‘what’s the student’s culture/identity/intercultural competence/sense of acculturation?’ But rather ‘how do they construct their culture/ identity / intercultural competence/sense of acculturation?’ (Dervin 2011, p. 41)

However, in employing the concept of space-time to designate cultural negotiation, Dervin overlooks the structural disparity of access to different time-spaces due to asymmetrical relations of privilege signaled by Bauman, pointing instead to a culturalist bias in research. According to this culturalist bias, researchers adopt a solid cultural interpretative stance towards research data, instead of a liquid interpretation of communicative utterances in intercultural encounters as instances of different time-spaces traversed and negotiated by the participants. Indeed, according to Dervin,
this culturalist bias persists despite the theoretical acceptance of the notion of the multifaceted and hybrid nature of identity- or liquid interculturality. Dervin (2011) highlights an example of this theoretical acceptance of liquid interculturality, which is subsequently abandoned in favour of a solid interpretation of data, in the literature concerning the intercultural experiences of Chinese students. In this instance, the culturalist bias of researchers in interpreting data surfaces in cultural categorization and stereotyping, despite the theoretical acknowledgement of the fluidity of cultural allegiances.

One aspect that has not been sufficiently emphasised in Dervin’s liquid approach is represented by the modalities in which structural constraints such as economic disadvantage, class and linguistic inequality might influence the agency of the interlocutors in a communicative exchange and their ability to traverse different time/spaces. This aspect is addressed in the context of what Dervin et al. (2011) define the politics of interculturality, with a critique of constructivist intercultural analysis that views the individual as a free agent able to switch between identities unconstrained from societal and economic structures,

Certain constructivist views, having replaced openly culturalist theories, are nonetheless as problematic as the latter when they position individuals as free of all influences and capable of choosing their identifications—this is precisely what “soft” postmodern relativism does. (Dervin et al. 2011, p. 11)

With the term the politics of interculturality, the authors refer to the plethora of terms that surround the area of intercultural studies (i.e. cross-cultural, multicultural, transcultural) and argue that the coinage of new terminology reflects specific socio-political and historical contexts. Although the creation and adoption of new terms demonstrate the attempt to avoid essentialism and culturalism, the result betrays a common ideological agenda regarding the construction of otherness,

all of these terms invoke perceptions of social reality, together with the ideologies and the a priori perceptions that underlie them, but do not constitute descriptions of the social realities themselves. Moreover, debates about the merits of one of these words to the detriment of the others tend to overshadow the fact that all of them invoke the same basic assumption, that is, that different cultures exist. Encounters between them are then immediately qualified as problematic—or unnatural at the very least—as cultures are
seen as corresponding to distinct geographical spaces. The attention paid to
the differences between these terms obscures the fact that they convey a
similar perspective on the world, on human societies and on the way they are
supposed to function. (Dervin et al. 2011, p. 5)

This means that all the different approaches share the same conceptualisa-
tion of otherness in terms of a dichotomous relation between self and the
cultural other, thus emphasising difference, and hence the problematic
character of intercultural interaction, over commonalities. From this per-
spective, the authors continue, there are two basic assumptions that char-
acterise intercultural research: on the one side, the reliance on the concept
of culture creates a polar contraposition between ‘us’ and ‘the other’, thus
implying a divide between cultures. On the other, this process of contra-
position and otherisation fosters discourses of insurmountable differences
between coexisting cultures in multicultural societies and the demand for
the creation of political instruments to resolve conflicts thereby generated.
In this way, the authors point at the political agenda behind the emergence
of the term intercultural, particularly the otherisation of migrants and the
need to regulate migratory flows within national borders, policies towards
minorities and processes of assimilation and acculturation. Hidden behind
this political dimension, the authors identify the social construction of
otherness that ascribes the intercultural label in the presence of asymmetri-
cal social relations,

Described as an encounter with “others” (or a certain kind of other), the
‘intercultural’ explicitly or implicitly reduces the other to this single ele-
ment—the “cultural”—while minimising or erasing characteristics of the
social identities of the interlocutors, such as gender, age, personal life trajec-
tories and other elements that can make all the difference—or their com-
monality. Thus, designating certain situations as ‘intercultural’ supposes
positioning oneself as an implicit, normative agent. (Dervin et al. 2011,
p. 12)

In other words, the danger in analysing and labelling encounters and
experiences as ‘intercultural’ is rooted in the implicit reproduction of
power relations in which the subject positions of the participants are
assigned according to the prevalent discourses of a given socio-political
context, albeit hidden behind the label of cultural difference. The authors
propose an epistemological shift from the idea of the intercultural, with its
emphasis on cultural difference and the meeting with a cultural other, to interculturality which focuses on the processuality of these encounters. This processuality accounts for the fact that identity is not fixed, but it is the result of the interactions that individuals experience in society. Individuals are viewed as dialogic entities constantly evolving through interaction, able to draw upon a range of resources available to them: discursive, economic, political and social. This notion of the individual counteracts narrow labelling and cultural categorization, or cultural neo-essentialism, and while it is recognized that individuals are conscious agents and not simply representatives of a specific culture, the authors acknowledge the presence of unequal social relations.

The multiple ways individuals construct social relations and meanings cannot reduce them to mere “representatives” of a given culture. The interlocutors in the spotlight in our research are full-fledged agents who may make conscious and considered choices, and not culturalised objects supposedly controlled by their cultural identities. This, however, does not prevent us from noting the presence and the force of unequal social relations: we do not assert that they are completely free in making these choices, but rather that margins for manoeuvre exist and that they are utilised both in everyday life and when special events take place (rites of passage, death…). (ibid.)

From this perspective, the interplay between agency and structure becomes predominant in determining the relation between self and other in intercultural encounters. As Block argues, despite clear acknowledgments of social structures in intercultural communication, for example in the work of Holliday and Piller, it is crucial to determine the relationship between structure and agency and make clear the extent to which participants in applied linguistics and language and intercultural communication research are in control of their own agency,

Are they totally constrained by the social structures which envelope them and shape the activity in which they engage? Or are they free to act as they please in the different domains of activity in which they find themselves on a day-to-day basis? (Block 2013, p. 142)

When framed as mutually exclusive, the relationship between structure and agency reproduces the dichotomy between essentialist intercultural communication, in which the individual is constrained within the
boundaries determined by cultural identity (as in essentialist intercultural research, e.g. Hall 1995; Hofstede and Hofstede 2004), and constructivist notions of identity as emergent in social interaction (e.g Monceri’s interculturing self, 2003, 2009; Dervin’s liquid interculturality, 2011). A third way is adopted in Holliday’s (2011, 2013) recognition of the limits imposed by structural constraints on the agency of individuals in intercultural encounters, while rejecting the cultural determinism and the individualism of essentialist intercultural communication. Nevertheless, another conceptual knot presents itself in the form of discourses of awareness and achievement of an emancipated intercultural consciousness, as adopted in Holliday’s notion of a critical cosmopolitan potential and in Guilherme’s critical awareness model.

**Holliday and the Critical Cosmopolitan Potential**

Holliday (2013) engages with the notion of structure by postulating a grammar of culture to interpret intercultural events. In this grammar of culture, the individual is shaped by social and political structures such as cultural resources (e.g. education, language, religion, traditions), economic systems, national politics and global positioning, particularly in relation to Western and non-Western cultural perspectives. According to this framework, the personal trajectories of individuals are in constant dialogue with the structures that surround them, due to underlying universal cultural processes which are shared by everyone regardless of background and that allow the negotiation of the individual with the structural dimension. This ability to transcend national cultures and cross cultural boundaries enables the emerging of patterns that are common in human behaviour notwithstanding cultural identification. In this sense, a relevant aspect of Holliday’s grammar of culture is that the underlying universal cultural processes present two aspects: on the one side, the shared universal ability allows individuals to interact with the particular realities encountered, demonstrating the creative potential to engage with structures; on the other, that same universal ability is at the origin of cultural prejudice, representing ‘a common mechanism for making limited sense through easy answers’ (Holliday 2013, p. 1), meaning the tendency to simplify the unknown using cultural stereotypes. According to Holliday, critical thinking on identity and culture can be unlocked by engineering ‘the right readings’ (Holliday 2011, p. 36). This means that critical cultural awareness can be fostered through the use of three interpretive strategies: thick description, bracketing and making the familiar strange, as illustrated in
Table 2.1. A crucial pedagogical task consists in uncovering those underlying features and ‘unlearn’ the impact of ideology in shaping discourses of culture, particularly in the Western pretence of neutrality embedded in the belief of its scientific and technical superiority evident in the neo-essentialism of intercultural training, and in narratives of Orientalism (Said 2003), based on the idea of the ‘foreign Other’ (Holliday 2011).

Ideology, according to Holliday, establishes a dichotomy between a Western self and a marginalised periphery and the task of uncovering its works constitutes an emancipatory practice through which social structures can be modified by social agency. In order to explain behaviour in intercultural contexts, Holliday (2011) contrasts two models of social theory- a structural functional model and social action theory. Structural-functionalism is attributed to Durkheim’s (1964) view that society represents an organic system composed of separate institutions that contribute to the whole. Holliday (2011) ascribes this theory to intercultural neo-essentialism, according to which individual behaviour is expression of a national culture and national cultures can be described and compared according to their respective characteristics. Social action theory asserts the independence of social action (e.g. Weber 1964), and thus the ability of individuals to negotiate the cultural resources available to them. Even in situations of manifest oppression, argues Holliday, the ability to think critically remains a characteristic of all individuals. In this model of social action, the individual negotiates an established culture, which is described as a dominant discourse embedded in the social structure, and through a personal journey creates a personal cultural identity that is emergent and evolving.

Holliday’s intercultural model is based on the notion of universal cultural processes that allow individuals to negotiate cultural realities that can be traced to a post-structuralist notion of subjectivity, able to act creatively and shape cultural identity whilst engaging with powerful and dominant
discourses (see Weedon 1987, on the ability of the individual to occupy subject positions within a web of discourses and power relations). At the same time, the idea that ideological falsifications can be unmasked through the adoption of critical cultural awareness, and the development of a critical cosmopolitan consciousness, is rooted in narratives of emancipatory praxis (e.g. the emancipatory practices of teachers who relate theory to praxis in order to fulfil their transformative role, rejecting the notions of knowledge as a banking system and accumulated capital in Freire 1996 and Giroux 1993, and the framework for critical intercultural citizenship, Guilherme 2002). In this context, the critical cosmopolitan position advocated by Holliday addresses the contradiction at the heart of cultural relativism as the impossibility to establish grounds for right action, and postulates in its place an underlying ability to interact in intercultural communication that is common to all. This critical cosmopolitanism is based on two paradigms of culture- small culture and large culture (Holliday 1999). The commonly accepted understanding of culture conforms to the large culture paradigm, based on the reduction to ethnic and national characters. The notion of small culture, however, emphasises the cohesive behaviour of small social groupings, without the culturist reduction to ethnic or national stereotypes.

In relation to the notion of large culture, Holliday claims that it is somehow unavoidable, “an inescapable occupational hazard in cultural analysis” (1999, p. 242) and, for this reason, he invites an increased awareness of “what its conceptualisation involves” and its “ideological implications” (ibid.). In this sense, researchers need to monitor their own discourses and “the ideological orientation of their own small culture” (p. 259), and to understand through the use of discourse analysis (Fairclough 1995), the details of how small culture and discourse operate if they are to be truly resilient and able to make choices (Holliday 1999, p. 260). One contention in regard to Holliday’s analysis is that it operates within an unresolved dichotomy between a view of subjectivity in line with post-structuralism and a modernist emancipatory praxis aimed at uncovering the false consciousness and “prejudice of the dominant imagined world” (Holliday 2011, p. 189), based on ideological falsifications and the perceived superiority of Western cultural perspectives. To this dominant perspective, Holliday opposes the counter-discourse of the marginal world:

The marginal world represents the Periphery, or the vernacular, struggling for recognition (...). The marginal world remains half hidden by the established and dominant imagined worlds (...). (Holliday 2011, pp. 189–190)
Thus, the marginal world remains hidden under the ideological falsifications of the Centre. In this context, Holliday proposes three social facts (Durkheim 1982) that illustrate the reality of cultural chauvinism against non-Western cultures, albeit refusing Durkheim’s determinism and allowing for the possibility of action through critical analysis and the consequent uncovering of false consciousness:

1. Ideology is a fact of social life, visible in language and everyday behaviour.
2. Ideology is hidden through projecting technical superiority as a neutral fact.
3. The Western self imagines a culturally deficient foreign other, sustained through cultural and linguistic imperialism and the construction of regional, religious and ethnic cultures. (Adapted from Holliday 2011, p. 191)

Therefore, the aim of critical analysis resides in activating the underlying universal cultural processes and “see through the illusion” of ideology behind the chauvinism towards “the Periphery in the emergent cultural world” (Holliday 2011, p. 192). Despite the recognition that counter-discourses of the marginal world are also ideologically constructed and thus no more ‘real’ than dominant discourses, and that they are also in danger of false consciousness, there remains a dichotomy between “Western domination and chauvinism” (Holliday 2011, p. 190) and non-Western societies, the privileged locus of emergent counter-discourses to the ideological dominance of the West. This dichotomy indicates a higher reality that is uncovered through the exercise of critical awareness, which uncovers false ideological positions and essentialism. A similar critical approach is developed by Guilherme in the context of language education and intercultural citizenship.

**Guilherme: Critical Intercultural Citizenship**

Education is the focus of critical intercultural awareness (Guilherme 2002), which is identified as the critical dimension in foreign language education and outlines the characteristics of the critical intercultural citizen. Guilherme identifies the philosophical foundations of critical awareness in critical theory and post-modernism, the latter discussed through the work of Lyotard (1984, 1988), Baudrillard (1994) and Derrida (1997,
Regarding critical theory, Guilherme focuses on the emancipatory character of the Frankfurt School, particularly the notion of intersubjectivity that replaces the individualistic and atomistic individual of Enlightenment, according to which the individual could dominate the world through objectifying reason.

The aim of critical theory was identified by Horkheimer (1982) in the role of reason embedded in social relations, which acquires an emancipatory character that brings about changes in society. This happens through the exercise of critical reason, beginning with the explanatory critique of society, and subsequently with the transformation of all the factors that limit human freedom and emancipation, in order to liberate human beings from “all the circumstances that enslave them” (Horkheimer 1982, p. 244).

Adopting Horkheimer’s perspective, Guilherme writes that: “Emancipation in this sense is achieved through critical thinking which for the early Frankfurtians had the aim of rescuing the oppressed as well as a declining culture” (Guilherme 2002, p. 68). Guilherme draws upon the theory of communicative action (Habermas 1984) with the emancipatory intent of identifying the obstacles to understanding through the analysis of intersubjective communication. In the theory of communicative action, truth is constructed discursively on the basis of four validity claims that constitute an ideal speech situation: that what we say is comprehensible, that it is true, that there is a normative basis for the claim, and finally that it is a sincere expression of the speaker’s feelings (Habermas 1984; Outhwaite 2009). If the four validity claims are observed within an ideal speech situation, it is possible to achieve a rational consensus between speakers. From this perspective, the importance of critical theory for critical culture awareness resides in the view of reason as socially embedded and thus influenced by different cultural perspectives. Furthermore, according to Guilherme critical theory confers a political scope to critical interculturalism in uncovering patterns of domination and ideological representations of culture.

The enhancement of the liberating power of critical rationality is, therefore, a valuable asset that the notion of critical cultural awareness borrows from Critical Theory. (Guilherme 2002, p. 89)

Guilherme combines the emancipatory character of critical rationality with post-modernist notions of hybridity and cultural criticism in the context of global politics and the electronically mediated character of contemporary life. The concepts she draws upon regard the sense of hybridity, uncertainty
and undecidability that characterize the post-modern critique of modernist narratives of rationality (Featherstone 1988; Vattimo 1988; Best and Kellner 1991, 1997). In this context, according to Guilherme the contribution of post-modernism reinforces the role of cultural criticism in creating dissent and promoting diversity and change. This philosophical framework is translated in Guilherme’s emancipatory pedagogical practice, according to which teachers are regarded as intellectuals who relate theory to praxis in order to fulfill their transformative role, rejecting the notions of knowledge as a banking system and accumulated capital (Freire 1996; Giroux 1993) and changing the image of schools from sites of transmission of knowledge into sites where knowledge is produced through active critical practice. The ability to act interculturally requires that teachers become cultural mediators, in order to help students clarify their cultural identifications and emphasising the role of dialogue in developing critical and participatory citizenship through the acquisition of skills and competences that allow the suspension of judgement and the ability to empathise with the values of others even when they are not compatible with our own (Byram 2008). The elements that are considered crucial factors in the development of critical intercultural citizenship (Phipps and Guilherme 2004) can be grouped under the five categories of reflection, dissent, difference, dialogue and empowerment. Beginning with the development of cultural and political awareness through critical reflection, critical intercultural learning will cause the self to recognise the existence of contrasting values and thus the need to negotiate with the other. In this way, the adoption of a critical attitude towards perceptions of culture provides the nexus with critical action and the development critical intercultural responsibility. This sequence of learning is illustrated in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2  Critical intercultural citizenship

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<th>Reflection</th>
<th>Dissent</th>
<th>Difference</th>
<th>Dialogue</th>
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<tr>
<td>Critical reflection</td>
<td>Recognition of the existence of dissenting</td>
<td>Critical appraisal of linguistic and</td>
<td>Nexus between critical reflection and</td>
<td>Intercultural responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural and political awareness</td>
<td>and contrasting values Ability to negotiate between ‘the Self’ and the Other’</td>
<td>cultural canons and standards Questioning of the perceived inferiority of cultural other by Western standards</td>
<td>critical action</td>
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A characteristic of critical pedagogy centred on intercultural communication is the relationship between two contrasting tendencies, one focused on emancipatory ideals that seek to counteract the idea of schools as places where inequality is reproduced as habitus (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977) and the other based on post-modern concerns with identity and culture. The focus on critical action that characterises this model of critical intercultural awareness presupposes a belief that people are not simply powerless towards structural constraints but that they can forge a space for agency and critical action within institutional spaces. In this context, Apple and Whitty argue that postmodern emphasis on the contingent and the local contributes to the possibility for individual actors to shape educational discourses, although any emancipatory potential seems to be submerged by the language of accountability and efficiency that dominates education and the ideology of consumer choice of neo-liberalist politics that ‘facilitates a denial of the importance of structural disadvantage’ (Apple and Whitty 1999, p. 18).

According to Giroux (2004), critical rethinking of the role of schools and teachers requires that classrooms are viewed as sites of micropolitics in which those wider discourses are played out. This means that for Giroux the development of a radical form of pedagogy able to counteract the erosion of democratic public life requires the reconciliation of the modernist ideal of an ethical and political discourse of emancipation in the exercise of critical reason with the postmodern focus on ‘the contingent and the specific’ (Giroux 2004, p. 66). From this perspective, moving from the different ethical discourses that shape students’ experiences, educators can forge a relationship between the self and the other: ‘Ethics becomes a practice that broadly connotes one’s personal and social sense of responsibility to the Other’ (Giroux 2004, p. 67, capitalisation in the original).

The Emancipated Intercultural Subject

The issue of emancipatory praxis represents a major concern in the critical intercultural approaches proposed by Holliday and Guilherme. However, adopting a post-structural feminist position it is possible to highlight an aspect that is particularly poignant in the context of intercultural education, relating to the model of rationality employed in discourses of intercultural critical awareness. As the union of the two words suggest- inter and cultural, the term intercultural implies dialogue across cultures. This idea of cultural dialogue translates in emancipatory educational practice as
the critical appreciation of cultural ideologies, the recognition of otherising practices and the possibility of reaching critical awareness regarding the reality of oppression and cultural domination (Holliday 2011). Nonetheless, the appreciation of cultural difference coupled with the idea of liberation from ideological falsifications presents a theoretical problem.

On the one hand, the rejection of grand narratives of totality in favour of the activation of differences (Lyotard 1991), presents the danger of turning intercultural communication praxis into a purely intellectual exercise that eschews issues of hegemony in current discourses on culture and identity, and promoting a cultural relativism in which anything goes. This form of relativism has been described as ludic post-modernism (McLaren 1995), a playful and depoliticised discourse that by emphasising difference is oblivious to the realities of power and inequality, in particular in reference to minority identities. On the other hand, the emancipatory agenda behind discourses of cultural hegemony and ideology runs the risk of relying on the vision of a final consensus that would follow once false consciousness has been unmasked, a form of totality that glosses over the complexity and contradictory nature of the real in the illusory achievement of a transcendental truth that would finally win over other validity claims due to its own incontrovertible arguments. In regard to this conundrum, the feminist critical perspective on emancipation (Luke and Gore 1992) problematizes the emancipatory ideal of critical pedagogy, in particular the identification of the Enlightenment equation of “knowing, naming and emancipation” (Lather 1992, p. 131) with the ideal of the historical role of a self-conscious human agency guided by the vanguard role of the critical intellectual. From this feminist position, the foundational and unitary rational subject is rejected as a form of oppression of the other (Weedon 1987), a perspective which Ellsworth (1992) exemplifies in the paternalistic use of the word empowerment employed in critical pedagogy and the notion of the educator giving voice to her students.

Following Spivak (1988, 2004), discussing the issue of class and gender inequality adds complexity to the contraposition between dominant and peripheral cultures, or Centre and Periphery proposed by Holliday. According to Hall (1996) the idea of a Western society represents a historical construct rather that a definite geographical reality. Hall argues that for a society to qualify as Western, it has to display specific characteristics—being developed, industrialized, urbanized, secular and modern. These features indicate an organization of knowledge in which perceived Western
and non-Western characteristics are distributed along a dichotomous axis: industrial-rural, developed-underdeveloped, secular-religious, modern-retrograde. Organized along these binary terms, non-Western societies become a counterpoint to the West, with a narrative that defines the West as a rational, chronologically linear, progressive entity and relegates non-Western societies to the role of the cultural other, dominated by irrationality, historical immobility and religious fervour (Said 2003; Nair-Venugopal 2012). Spivak (1988, 2004) describes Western cultural hegemony through the concept of epistemic violence, meaning the colonizing practice of creating an inferior other in the form of the colonial subject. However, for Spivak the reproduction of this dominant ideology does not proceed exclusively from the Centre to the Periphery, to use Holliday’s description of Western and non-Western realities, but it is produced by class and gender stratifications within the Periphery itself. Particularly, Spivak refers to a transnational professional elite class involved in economic and human rights development in the context neo-colonialism, intended as an economic enterprise of imperialism in the developing world,

There is no state on the globe today that is not part of the capitalist economic system or can want to eschew it fully. (Spivak 2004, p. 84)

Therefore, according to this argument, the contraposition between Centre and Periphery is not only geographical, because the same distinction is present within the Periphery itself through the division between a privileged transnational class and a subaltern class. Spivak describes the subaltern as “removed from lines of social mobility” (1988, p. 531). This term was employed by Gramsci (2007) to indicate Italian rural peasantry, and is extended by Spivak to include lower-class subaltern groups in colonial and post-colonial contexts. This means that, in contrast to the global professional elite referred by Spivak, there exists a marginal class within the peripheral world, composed by subaltern groups. In this context, if subaltern groups are subjected to class inequality, subaltern women experience an additional form of oppression in the form of gender inequality (Spivak 2004; Andreotti 2007), which can be extended to include oppression towards LGBT - lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender identities (Gray 2013). Thus, the politics of class in the reproduction of cultural hegemony can be related to the divide between the global elite and the subaltern class employed by Spivak to the concept of space-time discussed in reference to liquid interculturality. In this context, the use of the notion of
space-time can be shifted from Dervin’s idea of cultural identity as the ability to inhabit and negotiate a variety of space-times, opposed to rigid cultural identifications. Instead, the term can be employed to indicate class privilege in gaining access to technology that allows the flow of information in real time without the limitations imposed by spatial distance. In this way, privilege is limited to those with the economic means to access the compression of time and space (Bauman 2000) that characterizes global late modernity, or post-modernity. Understood in these terms, the division between Centre and Periphery proposed by Holliday is defined not only by ideological constructs of culture, but is reproduced primarily through class inequality, in which gender inequality is also included. To this end, by pointing at class and gender stratifications within the Periphery and at the existence of an elite class that is transcultural, and thus intersecting both Periphery and Centre, Spivak’s critical reading of colonial and postcolonial experiences of cultural domination and hegemony adds complexity to Holliday’s contraposition between two irreconcilable cultural realities, one possessing a higher truth (the Periphery, non-Western) and the other expressing an ideological falsification (the Centre, Western). Moreover, following Spivak’s deconstruction of the type of rationality that informs the idea of giving voice to the other from an emancipatory perspective, unproblematized emancipatory practices are in danger of committing epistemic violence, which designates the naturalization of Western narratives of enlightenment, awareness, freedom and democracy, viewed as universal and ahistorical values (Chakrabarty 2000). Spivak (2004) describes this process of epistemic violence as the burden of the fittest, whereby Western constructs derived from specific historical processes are universalized and naturalized from a dominant position to become the means of liberation of the subaltern, cultural other. The idea of a burden of the fittest leads Spivak to contrast two forms of responsibility: responsibility for the other- meaning that is the duty of the dominant position, the fittest, to provide the means of enlightenment to the unprivileged other; and responsibility to the other- intended as answerability and accountability (Andreotti 2007). This idea of ethics as direct engagement with the other is for Spivak a necessary precondition for initiating wider changes,

The necessary collective efforts are to change laws, relations of production, systems of education, and health care. But without the mind-changing one-on-one responsible contact, nothing will stick. (Spivak 2004, p. 383)
Spivak’s critique of Western rationality as a naturalized dominant practice that intersects with the Periphery can be transposed to the idea of critical intercultural awareness, intended as a form emancipation from ideological falsifications able to readdress power imbalances. Here, it is suggested that the type of emancipatory praxis proposed in critical intercultural communication operates from the perspective of Hegelian dialectics (Hegel 1956), as opposed to the idea of negative dialectics (Adorno 1973). Whereas the former is characterised by the attempt to inscribe reality in a totality, the latter refuses the concept of totality in favour of fragmentation and non-identity.

**Hegelian Dialectics as a Narrative of Positive Resolution**

Hegelian dialectics is based on teleological finality, meaning that reality presents an intrinsic rationality that becomes increasingly evident through the unfolding of the Spirit (*Geist*—a higher form of consciousness of which individual consciousness is a limited manifestation) to self-realisation. This process leads to the reconciliation of differences and the resolution of all conflicts into a superior unity (Hegel 1956; deVries 1991). In Hegelian dialectics, the force behind the dialectic process is reason, which unfolds to reveal the rational substance of reality. This means that rational understanding resolves all the aporias of thought and achieves absolute knowing, once all contradictions have been resolved in the higher unity of the Spirit. In this way, the whole (or totality) is considered true, whilst the parts constituting the whole, which are deemed to be partial and incomplete in themselves, are subsumed in a totality through the dialectic process. Although the triadic formula of thesis, antithesis and synthesis is considered to represent the principal element of the dialectical method, Hegel utilizes it only in *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1977) and in reference to Kant. However, Hegel adopts triadic expressions that involve the terminology of affirmation, negation and negation of negation that are conceptually equivalent to the notions of thesis, antithesis and synthesis (Kaufmann 1988; Beiser 2005). In this context, for clarity of purpose the three stages of thesis, antithesis and synthesis are employed to illustrate this process of subsuming, or overcoming of the parts in a totality, applied to intercultural communication.
The three stages begin with a concept, or thesis, through the negation or opposite, known as antithesis, and finally reaching a resolution in the synthesis, when contradictions and conflicts are solved in a higher totality. Thus, through self-examination, consciousness arrives at the rational comprehension of reality, making the world fully intelligible through the dialectical movement (Stern 2002; Heidemann 2008). Discourses of critical awareness and emancipation create a dichotomy between a negative state prior to the acquisition of intercultural awareness, and a ‘real’ or ‘true’ state, in which conflicting claims are reconciled in the final unity of intercultural consciousness. As in the teleological finality of Hegelian dialectics, the description of the development of critical intercultural awareness follows a similar dialectical pattern in which the critical speaker undergoes a process of transformation from a monocultural entity to an aware and emancipated intercultural speaker. Prior to the encounter with the other, the self is a monocultural entity, a state upset by being exposed to another cultural perspective, through language learning (e.g. Byram 2002) or international sojourning and educational exchanges (e.g. Jackson 2011). In these accounts of intercultural learning, the encounter with an unknown cultural perspective creates anxiety and culture shock, which can lead to miscommunication and negative stereotyping as described by Holliday (2011) and in Bennett’s (1993) triadic model of intercultural sensitivity, which progresses from the ethnocentric stages of denial, defence and minimization to the development of ethnorelativistic attitudes of acceptance, adaptation and integration. Table 2.3 illustrates the intercultural process of emancipation according to the triadic pattern. Guilherme (2002) adopts a similar triadic pattern, summarising the critical process in three main moments: the approach to a foreign culture, the engagement with the other culture and finally the performing of intercultural acts. As outcome of this experience, the self discovers the intrinsic and higher finality in which all the negative elements of the intermediate stage are transformed into tolerance, awareness and reflexivity, revealing the self as a critically aware intercultural speaker. In other words, this critical process of cultural awareness follows a pattern of positive resolution and presupposes the end of conflicting claims subsumed in a higher unity of understanding. This attribution of ontological existence to the intercultural self and its accompanying narratives of final resolution and harmony between conflicting positions can be contrasted with negative dialectics, an approach that foregrounds the concept of non-identity and non-totality.
Adorno and Horkheimer (2010) argue that the dialectics of Enlightenment turns the idea of reason into its opposite concept, the idea of myth, following the Hegelian pattern of identity and non-identity, or thesis and antithesis. According to this internal dialectics, enlightenment reverts to mythology in the guise of positivist and instrumental reason producing totalitarianism and mass alienation. However, if Hegelian dialectics presupposes the positive resolution of the negative moment, in negative dialectics the two items remain separate, and continue to negate each other (Stone 2008). Adorno (1973) describes the dialectical process as an imposition of unity on diversity, meaning that identity between thought and its object, or between reason and reality, is achieved negatively through a process of elimination of difference. Thus, negative dialectics renounces the imposition of unity and teleological finality of Hegelian dialectics, admitting the open ended and contingent character of the dialectical process. Indeed, negative dialectics can be considered a dialectics of non-identity, which means that opposites are not resolved into a higher totality. Therefore, negative dialectics articulates “the divergence of concept and thing, subject and object, and their unreconciled state” (Adorno 2008), meaning that objects of knowledge cannot be entirely possessed by thought. From this perspective, negative dialectics engages with the practice of immanent critique, as opposed to transcendent critique. Whilst the latter establishes the principles of critique apriori before using them to criticize other theories from the outside, immanent critique exposes the internal contradictions of a theory or body of work, “remaining ‘within’ it” (Jarvis 1998, p. 6). Immanent critique does not resolve contradictions, abstracting a phenomenon from the totality to which it belongs, rather it examines relations within the totality of phenomena. The process of immanent critique proceeds through the arrangement of concepts into constellations, which means that an object of knowledge is connected to

### Table 2.3 Hegelian dialectics and intercultural consciousness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thesis</th>
<th>Antithesis</th>
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<tr>
<td>The self prior to the encounter with the other</td>
<td>The encounter with the other causes culture shock and anxiety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The encounter with the other causes culture shock and anxiety</td>
<td>The other as negation of the self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achievement of a higher totality: self and other are reconciled</td>
<td>The negative element is subsumed through a critical process of awareness that reveals the intrinsic finality of a higher intercultural consciousness</td>
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others by examining the historical processes in which it is embedded and the past relations with other objects that have contributed to shape it in its individual uniqueness. Thus, understanding a concept entails weaving a narrative that gathers a plurality of other concepts that illuminate each other. However, being historically produced, objects of knowledge are never fully grasped because they are evolving and unfinished (Stone 2008). The unifying moment survives without a negation of negation, or an overcoming of the negative by delivering itself to the abstraction of a supreme principle. It survives because there is no step-by-step progression from the concepts to a more general cover concept. Instead, the concepts enter a constellation. The constellation illuminates the specific side of the object, the side which to a classifying procedure is either a matter of indifference or a burden (Adorno 1973, p. 162). Not proceeding from concept to concept until a final reconciliation is found, the creation of constellations throws light on connections and aspects that have been previously ignored, reflecting the contingency and partiality of the objects being observed. In this way, dialectical thinking becomes fragmentary, renouncing the attempt to reconstruct a totality in the shape of a final concept that subsumes the others (Bowie 2013). Instead, it recognizes the historicity of an object of knowledge and examines it from the inside on its own terms. As Adorno explains,

The history locked in the object can only be delivered by a knowledge mindful of the historic positional value of the object in its relation to other objects—by the actualization and concentration of something which is already known and is transformed by that knowledge. Cognition of the object in its constellation is cognition of the process stored in the object. (Adorno 1973, p. 163)

Similarly, intercultural communication can be the object of an immanent critique. Taking its existence as a specific object of knowledge, it is possible to question its ontological and epistemological assumptions: its stemming from a conception of autonomy of the individual and its positioning of communication as a process that can be determined in advance and fixed using the appropriate instruments. The following chapters will attempt to conduct an immanent critique of intercultural communication and, adopting the principle of non-identity of negative dialectics, this book will postulate interaction in terms of open-endedness, while eschewing the search for an ideal harmony and final erasure of all differences in the unity of intercultural understanding.
CONCLUSION

This chapter engages with the perspectivist view of interculturality of Jensen and Monceri, concluding that the idea of a hybrid, changing self does not explore sufficiently the issue of structural constraints that influence intercultural encounters, despite the acknowledgement of the existence of power relations between self and other. In addition to perspectivist interculturalism, this chapter discusses the notion of liquid interculturality proposed by Dervin, in which structure appears in the form of hegemonic cultural practices that essentialise individuals with the attribution of rigid cultural traits. Finally, the chapter explores the emancipatory intercultural frameworks of Holliday and Guilherme. Both recognise the existence of structural constraints, although they emphasise the independence of individual action in uncovering hegemonic discourses and ideological falsifications. Regarding the notion of emancipation and intercultural awareness, the notion of the subaltern other and epistemic violence elaborated by Spivak (1988, 2004) highlights the Eurocentric bias in terms of epistemic violence in discourses of enlightenment and emancipation of the cultural other. Moreover, the contrast between Hegelian dialectics and Adorno’s negative dialectics opens the possibility of initiating an immanent approach to the critique of intercultural communication. The aim of such an immanent critique would be to examine the internal contradictions that emerge from the interrogation of its presuppositions, and to map out its connections with other concepts, such as the autonomy of the ethical self in Kantian moral philosophy and the functionalism of current models of intercultural competence.

REFERENCES


CHAPTER 3

The Ethics of Interculturalism

Abstract This chapter provides an illustration of the ethics of Levinas and its relevance for intercultural communication. It discusses the notion of subjectivity as it is formulated by Levinas, which Derrida hospitality provides an account of the relationship between self and other that informs an ethical conception of intercultural dialogue in the form of presence to one another as corporeal, embodied subjects who co-construct meanings. This chapter delineates an alternative understanding of intercultural interaction that relies on a dialogic idea of communication closely connected to the experiential sphere and the bodily aspects of lived human subjectivity.

Keywords Tolerance and intercultural discourse • Hospitality • Intercultural ethics

INTRODUCTION

The task facing the intercultural researcher who sets out to eschew essentialism and simplified categorisation of the other is to conduct empirical research focusing on the ‘inter’ of intercultural interaction, with the intention of bringing to light the porous line between self and other, as well as the ability of the self to negotiate multiple cultural realities creatively. The acceptance of uncertainty in the form of responsible engagement with others in dialogue, represents an epistemological position that poses an ethical dilemma for the researcher: is the aim of dialogue a dialectical...
search for a final moment of reconciliation of differences, in which the other is framed within the confines of a universal ethics of tolerance? What happens if this dialogue is interrupted due to irreconcilable differences? Does intercultural dialogue take sufficient account of the possibility of violence, misunderstanding and refusal to engage with the other in the search for an idealised end of conflict in the luminous light of critical intercultural awareness? Or, in other words, is intercultural communication rooted in a promise of understanding? This chapter will attempt to unravel this dilemma applying Derrida’s notion of the promise in order to examine critically the notion that knowledge and awareness of the other result in improved communication and harmonious interaction, and to identify the problematic consequences entailed in this simplified conceptualisation of human interaction.

The globalising tendencies of intercultural discourse result in the creation of a grand narrative (Lyotard 1984; Vandenabeele 2003) based on the universalised ideal of transparent and unambiguous information (Block and Cameron 2002) and on the ideas of tolerance and understanding from the hegemonic perspective of a dominant cultural position (Holliday 2010, 2011) underpinning the idea of intercultural competence. This grand narrative based on the value of efficiency in communicating interculturally appears in intercultural competence framework and intercultural training programs that focus on the acquisition of communicative skills to deal effectively with the other (Ferri 2016). Furthermore, the ideas of cooperation, dialogue and transformation that characterise emancipatory formulations of intercultural communication, outline the promise of a final moment of understanding that leads intercultural communication towards a universalistic notion of final reconciliation of differences. This last aspect in particular leaves unresolved the issue of contrasting claims in multicultural societies, leading to an aporia between theory and praxis (O’Regan and MacDonald 2007). According to this aporia, the promise of a final moment of understanding refers to the appeal to a transcendental signified, “an implied higher order of morality by which the differences that exist may be adjudicated and in some manner resolved” (MacDonald and O’Regan 2012, p. 4). This appeal to a higher order of morality leaves intercultural communication in a Kantian moral bind between universal claims to tolerance and the inability to provide “immanent—i.e. ‘here and now’ grounds for adjudicating between competing truth claims” (ibid., p. 6). Indeed, the use of the terms culture, cultural other, cultural difference that accompanies discourses of tolerance and intercultural
understanding is highly problematic, as illustrated in the debate on multiculturalism between liberal theorists and cultural relativists, in particular the dichotomy between the existence of separated group identities and the universalism of traditional citizenship theory (Squires 2002). The liberal critique highlights the essentialist view of culture embodied in the multicultural ideals of tolerance and respect of cultural difference that leaves unresolved the issue of individual freedom against cultural claims and group belonging, in other words the reconciliation between equality and difference (Barry 2001). In fact, the multicultural practice of ascribing cultural identities as a mark of difference generates a widespread fear of separateness that multicultural theorists address through the notion of integration intended in terms of a common form of citizenship (Taylor 1994; Kelly 2002; Phillips 2007). Alternative perspectives attempt to move beyond both multicultural relativism and liberal abstract universalism, arguing instead for a ‘pluralistically enlightened ethical universalism’ (Benhabib 2002, p. 36), which establishes a moral community committed to dialogical imperatives in the resolution of conflicts. This moral community is founded on the model of rational communicative ethics (Habermas 1984), in which equal protection under the law requires that individuals understand themselves as authors of the laws that bind society together through the creation of a public sphere (Critchley 2006; Outhwaite 2009). Similarly, Laclau proposes a relative universalization of values, meaning a universalism inscribed in a democratic dialogue between public spheres: “the particular can only fully realize itself if it constantly keeps open, and constantly redefines, its relation to the universal” (Laclau 2007, p. 65). The debate against particularism in the name of universal values is relevant not only in academic contexts, but has been increasingly prominent in the media and in political discourse. An exemplar instance being the speech of British prime minister David Cameron attacking multiculturalism in 2011, which followed similar attacks by the German chancellor Angela Merkel and the former French president, Nicolas Sarkozy (Cameron: my war on multiculturalism, The Independent, 5th February 2011), all pointing at the failure of multicultural policies to promote individual freedom, fostering instead separateness and values that are irreconcilable with life in modern Western liberal societies. This tendency towards the refusal of the other and the desire for a return to a more conservative era of national values has been evident in the movement behind Brexit, and in the victory of the anti-immigration rhetoric at the heart of Donald Trump’s victory in the US 2016 Presidential Elections. From this
perspective, the main issue at stake in the debate refers to the type of communities that can be created and sustained in a pluralist society. Pluralism generates anxiety about the validity of universal perspectives and moral norms and, in this context, it is necessary to define a form of ethical understanding between people with different interpretations of the ‘common good’. The claims of the politics of recognition have highlighted the misrecognition of minority identities perpetrated by hegemonic discourses that promote their own partial worldview to the level of universal validity (Taylor 1994). However, Appiah (1994) warns against an unsophisticated understanding of collective identities that would replace the tyranny of hegemonic culture with the tyranny of a tightly scripted minority identity. Thus the dichotomy between the rights of the individual and the claims of collective identities represents an impasse that seems to characterise multicultural societies, and it generates the need to define a model of ethical choice that could satisfy the demands of universalism while simultaneously showing respect for particularism and individual autonomy. In the context of intercultural communication research, a more nuanced account of otherness is necessary in order to problematize the role of cultural difference in shaping the categories of self and other and complement both Laclau’s and Benhabib’s idea of a moral community, balancing the claims of both universalism and relativism.

### The Promise as Deferred Understanding

Derrida (1974, 1984, 1997) defines the tendency to fulfilment and completeness in Western philosophical thinking in terms of a ‘metaphysics of presence’, relating this disposition to the idea of promise. According to this metaphysics of presence, Western metaphysical tradition encloses truth within a system of binary oppositions which refer to an original signified. In this system of binary oppositions one term is identified with full presence -or truth, and the other term, the negative, with the loss of presence (Norris 1982; Derrida 1997; Bradley 2008). This metaphysics of presence is reflected in the opposition between tolerance and intolerance: on the one side, the positive value of tolerance of the other, promoted by intercultural understanding; on the other, the opposed and the negative value of intolerance and refusal of the other and of the cultural practices attributed to the other (MacDonald and O’Regan 2012, p. 4). However, this dichotomy is unable to provide immanent reasons to resolve the conflicting claims of those who advocate tolerance and those who refuse it recalling visions of cultural purity which reassert nationalistic values and
divisive arguments across ethnic, linguistic, cultural and historical lines, an example being the terroristic acts of the Norwegian white supremacist, Anders Behring Breivik, the Wisconsin Sikh Temple shootings in 2012 carried out by another white supremacist, Wade Michael Page, the murder of Dr George Tiller by anti-abortion terrorist Scott Roeder in 2009, the terrorist attack on the satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo by Saïd and Chérif Kouachi in 2015, or the terrorist attacks in Paris in 2015 and in London in 2017, first in London Bridge and subsequently against Muslims outside a mosque in Finsbury Park. In these cases, the underlying concept refers to a ‘metaphysics of presence’ and the notion of a final moment in which competing claims will be resolved by defeating the ‘false’ or ‘negative’ opponent.

The idea of promise as deferred understanding recurs throughout Derrida’s philosophical investigations and it is described in the notion of a ‘disjointed’ temporality that is irreducible to presence (Derrida 1994; Wortham 2010), meaning that there is an element that remains irreducible to the system of binary oppositions of Western metaphysics, which is the experience of an emancipatory promise described in terms of a messianism without religion. This notion of messianism is connected to the idea of justice in terms of a ‘democracy to come’ (Derrida 1994, p. 74). According to the principle of disjointed temporality of this messianism without religion, the notion of a democracy to come does not represent an ideal future democracy, which is opposed to imperfect existing political systems. Instead, it embodies the irreducible element that eludes the system of oppositions established in the metaphysics of presence. This irreducible element is described in terms of a gap between “fact and ideal essence” (Derrida 1994, p. 80), or between the reality of existing political systems and the utopian ideal of a future democracy. Furthermore, this notion applies not only to existing forms of imperfect democracy, but according to Derrida it constitutes the apriori structure of the essence of justice itself. According to this form of messianism without religion, democracy is

a concept of a promise that can only arise in such a diastema (failure, inadequation, disjunction, disadjustment, being ‘out of joint’). That is why we always propose to speak of a future democracy in the future present, not even of a regulating idea, in the Kantian sense, or of a utopia at least to the extent that their inaccessibility would still retain the temporal form of a future present, and of a future modality of the living present. (Derrida 1994, p. 81)
This means that the ideas of democracy and justice cannot be established as full presence in a present or in a future time, because that would imply a return to the metaphysical binary opposition between a positive term that reflects truth and a term that negates this ideal. The idea of a democracy to come is described as an ‘experience of the impossible’ and a ‘messianic opening to what is coming’ (Derrida 1994, p. 82), defining ethics in terms of infinite responsibility and hospitality without reserve. In this interpretation, the promise stops being such when it is fulfilled, and thus in order to retain its messianic character it has to remain open: “It is performative in as much as it entails a pledge, an affirmation or giving that is not simply identical or exhausted by its specific content” (Wortham 2010, p. 146). In other words, the promise does not produce the event of which it speaks (Derrida 2001), maintaining the character of an unfulfilled promise that is constantly renewed in the tension between the act and its realisation. This tension is experienced in the aporia between existing political institutions operating within the framework of Western democratic liberalism, based on the notion of the nation-state, and the infinite ethical demand of unconditional hospitality that overflows the boundaries delimited by nation-states, and constitutes the regulating aspect of ethical responsibility. In an interview with Borradori, Derrida explains that:

We are always led back to the same aporia: how to decide between, on the one hand, the positive and salutary role played by the “state” form (the sovereignty of the nation-state) and, thus, by democratic citizenship in providing protection against certain kinds of international violence (the market, the concentration of world capital, as well as “terrorist” violence and the proliferation of weapons) and, on the other hand, the negative or limiting effects of a state whose sovereignty remains a theological legacy, a state that closes its borders to noncitizens, monopolises violence, controls its borders, excludes or represses noncitizens, and so forth? (Borradori 2003, p. 126)

Derrida’s definition of the idea of tolerance, understood in terms of ‘con-descending concession’, and ‘a form of charity’ (p. 127), contrasts with the idea of unconditional hospitality. In particular, Derrida’s notion of hospitality (2006) exposes the inherent contradiction of tolerance through the analysis of the word hospitality. In Derrida’s deconstruction, the words hospitality and hostility carry the binary oppositions friend/enemy, hospitality/hostility between host, intended as the welcomed guest, or the
stranger treated as friend or ally, and the stranger treated with hostility as an enemy (Derrida 2006, p. 210). According to this reading of the word, because the welcome conferred upon a guest is dependent on the goodwill of the host, that same welcome can be withdrawn, turning into hostility, if the rules of the household are not observed. Therefore, the exercise of tolerance is dependent on a conditional welcome, and this welcome can be withdrawn to exclude the other at any time. On the one hand, unconditional hospitality represents an impossible ideal, on the other, it provides an idea of perfectibility guiding the rules governing conditional hospitality. This idea of perfectibility exposes Derrida’s reluctance to enclose the practice of dialogue and the exercise of political deliberation within a totalising dimension that would lead to closure. An example of closure and of totalising tendencies in dialogue can be illustrated by the debates regarding universalism and particularism in multicultural societies, which are framed in dichotomous terms between tolerance of the cultural practices of the other and equality. In this sense, the notion of a democracy to come complements the necessity to reach a form of rational consensus implicit in the model of discursive democracy (Habermas 1984) but leaving open the possibility for further dialogue. Matuštík (2006, p. 280) describes this idea of perfectibility inherent in democracy itself in terms of an “exiled otherness” that reminds participants in a community of communication of the perils of the search for a totalising closure to the detriment of engagement in open ended dialogue. Assuming perfectibility as a characteristic of engagement in dialogue, Derrida’s deconstruction of the word hospitality resonates with the distinction proposed here in relation to intercultural communication between two forms of a promise of understanding, one intended in terms of final reconciliation and universal tolerance, and the other in terms of deferred understanding. This distinction addresses the problematic nature of the notion of tolerance of cultural practices employed in intercultural communication, which leaves the conceptualisation of the relationship self/other open to this internal contradiction highlighted by Derrida. In other words, tolerance generates an internal aporia between the acceptance of the cultural other as different, and the claim of a universal resolution of those same differences in a final ideal of unity (MacDonald and O’Regan 2012). This aporia can be traced to Kantian ethics and its ideal of a universality of reason.
Kantian ethics emerged in the context of the Enlightenment, with the attempt to define the separate domains of reason and religious obedience. In other words, the notion of morality as obedience to religious precepts was contested in the name of the human ability to direct actions conforming to the dictates of reason. Kant is responsible for the formulation of the conception of morality as autonomy and the subsequent redefinition of the relationship between individuals and society in terms of self-governance of the individual, guiding the change towards the establishment of Western liberal societies (Atwell 1986; Schneewind 1998). Kant (1979) divides philosophy into theoretical and practical, the first concerning knowledge and the other concerning the conduct of beings possessed of free will. In the latter application of philosophical reflection, ethics is a “theory of virtue” that studies the “intrinsic quality of actions” (p. 71) meaning to determine whether an action is not simply the result of compliance with the law, but of the correct moral disposition, in terms of strength in self-control and self-mastery. This correct moral disposition obeys the categorical imperatives guiding practical reason, and determines the free will and autonomy of all rational beings (Kant 2004). A crucial aspect of Kantian autonomy is that, as part of the noumenal realm (i.e. the realm of the thing-in-itself, unknowable to human experience), freedom is intended in transcendental terms: moral action is not the result of natural causation, but follows instead the categorical imperative, a categorical obligation not influenced by the pull of desires and interferences from the sensible world. Here resides the core of Kantian orthodoxy (Johnson 2007), the fact that authority originates in our individual reason, so we act freely only when we reject sensory interferences and place our actions under the scrutiny of a universal law. In fact, moral agents act either in heteronomous terms (Homo Phaenomenon), meaning that the moral law generates from the phenomenal world, or as autonomous agents according to the noumenal world (Homo Noumenon), when the action originates in the self-determining, rational and autonomous individual (Atwell 1986). Thus, ethics is a theory of virtue and a philosophy of action based on the strength of self-mastery in respect to the moral disposition, and it “provides rules for the proper use of our freedom, irrespective of particular applications of it” (Kant 1979, p. 2). The moral imperative corresponds to three separate conceptions of the “good”, of which the third represents the ideal of autonomy,
The influence of Kantian ethics has been most evident in the development of the concept of autonomy in moral philosophy. The idea of autonomy is characterised by an internal tension between the two words ‘auto’ and ‘nomos’, meaning respectively the will of a rational being, and the law objectively binding on that same will (Wood 2008). According to Kant in Metaphysics of Morals (1983), the ‘nomos’ is grounded on objective reasons valid for all rational beings who recognise the principles of the law as universally valid and objectively binding. According to the concept of autonomy, rational beings must be viewed under the two attributes of Homo Noumenon, the intelligible self imposing the duty of respect to the law, and Homo Phaenomenon, the empirical self who is subject to the law. This split self is regulated conscience, which Kant describes as an internal court presiding over the self. According to the modalities of this internal court, which operates under the faculty of judgement, the self is at the same time the accuser and the accused:

Every man has a conscience and finds himself observed by an internal judge, who threatens him and keeps him in awe (respect combined with fear). This authority watching over the laws within him is not something which he himself (arbitrarily) creates, but is incorporated in his being. If he tries to run away, his conscience follows him like a shadow. (Kant 1983, p. 101)

From this description of the internal judge presiding over the free, self-determining moral being in the form of the Homo Noumenon, in contrast to the heteronomy of the Homo Phaenomenon, whose conduct is generated by stimuli coming from the sensible world, it is clear that the notion of autonomy represents the pivotal feature of Kant’s entire moral philosophy (Atwell 1986). Recent interest in autonomy emphasises an individualistic interpretation of the concept. This focus on individualism begins in the 1970s (see Neely 1974; Norris 1982; Dworkin 1988;
Frankfurt 1988), with the development of hierarchical accounts of personal autonomy in which the content of the moral law is considered neutral, and autonomy depends on the ability to endorse or repudiate desires that move individuals to action (Taylor 2005). More recently, the concept of autonomy has acquired relevance in the context of the relationship between agency (the capacity for intentional actions), and liberty (independence from controlling influences), in reference to applied ethics and the notion of accountability of morally responsible agency (Arpaly 2005; Beauchamp 2005; Haji 2005). However, the aspect most relevant in the context of this research is that concerning the debate between a liberal conception of individual autonomy (Rawls 1999; Barry 2001) and multicultural claims to group identity, particularly Taylor’s (1994) politics of recognition and the formulation of a multiculturalism framed within liberal-democratic values (Appiah 2005; Kymlicka 2007). The relevance of Kantian ethics in this debate resides in the historical context in which the concept autonomy of the individual was originally elaborated, guiding social change from pre-Enlightenment morality to modern liberal societies, and subsequently entering in conflict with claims of group recognition in multiculturalism. In conclusion, the most significant aspect of Kantian autonomy is that the self is able to act responsibly, becoming accountable for his/her own actions, only as an autonomous and self-regulating rational being, the Homo Noumenon. Adorno and Horkheimer in the Frankfurt School (2010) began the systematic critique of the idea of reason inherited from the Enlightenment, and the associated notion of a transcendental subject and instrumental reason. The Enlightenment project was revalued by Habermas (1987), who revalued reason in relation to its various social and embodied incarnations. This situated nature of reason is particularly evident, according to Habermas, in everyday communicative practices underpinned by a drive to mutual understanding. The post-modern turn is associated with a critique of reason in favour of ‘the other’, meaning the excluded from uniformity and from the self-transparency of the transcendental subject (Poster 1989; Lyotard 1984, 1988; Honneth 1995; Derrida 2001). In post-modern ethics, the notion of asymmetrical obligation introduces a reversal of the Kantian perspective of equal treatment and autonomy underpinned by the categorical imperative.

Levinas’s notion of the asymmetrical relation with the other signifies this reversal introducing the distinction between moral, or the abstract
code of conduct of the moral imperative, and ethics, or the encounter with the other person in her embodied corporality.

Ethics: a comportment in which the other, who is strange and indifferent to you, who belongs neither to the order of your interest nor to your affections, at the same time matters to you. A relation of another order than that of knowledge, in which the object is given value by knowing it, which passes for the only relations with beings. Can one be for an I without being reduced to an object of pure knowledge? Placed in an ethical relation, the other man remains other. (Levinas 2001, p. 48)

Levinas displaces the traditional language of metaphysics and operates a semantic transformation of its terminology. In the history of metaphysical inquiry the principal preoccupation has been the rational apprehension of reality through concepts such as being, universals or first causes and the definition of the unchanging elements that constitute the essence of morals or free will. Levinas dispenses with these preoccupations regarding ontology and defines ethics in terms of responsibility to the singular other through a radical move from the Kantian ideal of autonomy to the notion of passivity of the self exposed to the other. This displacement of the traditional concerns of metaphysical thought translates into a movement of positive desire towards alterity- the ‘otherness’ of the other (Critchley 1999; Derrida 2010). In this regard, Levinasian ethics represents a reversal of the tradition of the cogito- the I think of Descartes. Levinas describes the solitude of the self in its ontological state, as riveted to the materiality of the body and subject to its needs and demands. Only the ethical relation awakens the self from this state, when it is exposed to the other. The crucial difference with Kantian ethics arises at this point, in the determination of the motivation to act according to ethical principles. In the Kantian tradition of autonomy, the ethical act stems from an abstract moral imperative to which the self abides in accordance to the dictates of transcendental reason. In heteronomous Levinasian terms, however, the ethical act originates from the other, from the ethical demand that the other imposes upon me. In this sense, the human acquires its significance only in relation to the other, and not prior to that, when the self is singled out by the other who imposes an ethical demand. This theme of ethical responsibility originates from the immanent here and now, which is conceptualised in a series of oppositions: accusativity vs subjectivity; asymmetry vs symmetry; heteronomy vs autonomy and proximity vs distance.
ACCU SATIVITY VS. SUBJECTIVITY

The self experiences and relates to the world according to two modalities, an ontological relation and an ethical relation (Levinas 2006b). In the first instance, subjectivity organises experience through knowledge, according to the transcendental apperception of the Cogito or of the Kantian I think. Thus, on the one side, subjectivity opens to the world as intentionality of consciousness, through knowledge. On the other, the self experiences the world in a modality that is not related to ontological knowledge (the knowledge of being), but is elicited by the existential and corporeal discovery of vulnerability. This experience of the self opening to the world as an embodied being represents a traumatic experience, which is likened to a “stripping of the skin exposed to wound and outrage” (Levinas 2006b, p. 63). This state is brought about by the experience of sensibility, lived first in terms of enjoyment and then in what Levinas defines in terms of ‘exposedness to the other’ (1998, p. 75). This means that, if enjoyment represents the culmination of the ego, the ‘singularisation of the ego in its coiling back upon itself’ (p. 73), the encounter with the other is lived as an experience that exceeds the categories of representation and apperception of the rational mind, and that is likened to the experience of a trauma. In this mode, the self becomes the locus of an encounter with the other. Here, subjectivity is lived in a modality that is defined as ‘accusativity’, meaning that it is the other who calls the self to action:

At least no escape is possible with impunity. The other calls upon that sensibility with a vocation that wounds, calls upon an irrevocable responsibility, and thus the very identity of a subject. (Levinas 1998, p. 77)

This notion of subjectivity lived in the modality of accusativity, is not reducible to the categories of the mind, because it pertains to the sphere of the corporeal and of embodiment. In Levinas’s words, the experience of meeting the other in this modality is ‘independent of the adventure of cognition’ because in this instance the ‘corporeality of the subject is not separable from its subjectivity’ (p. 78). Thus, accusativity represents the ethical subject as ‘flesh and blood’, whereas rational subjectivity is identified with the abstract ‘I think’, the cogito, separated from the body. This opposing relationship is reflected in the encounter with the other, depending on whether the encounter happens in the modality of the cogito or in that of accusativity. As cogito, the self categorises the other into the categories of
the known, or the categories of the same and of identity in Levinasian terms, operating autonomously and according to abstract principles. As accusativity, however, the relation with the other is invested with responsibility.

In the context of intercultural communication, the notion of the face of the other emphasises the materiality of the embodied other facing the self (Sparrow 2013), which is expressed in communication through the notions of the saying and the said, meaning respectively the event of speech and the content of speech. As an illustration of this reading of the face of the other, in the following quote Levinas explains that, as opposed to ontological knowledge of the other, the ethical relation is established in the presence of self and other in their materiality, as embodied beings,

I do not know if one can speak of a ‘phenomenology’ of the face, since phenomenology describes what appears. So, too, I wonder if one can speak of a look turned toward the face, for the look is knowledge, perception. I think rather that access to the face is straightaway ethical. You turn yourself toward the Other as toward an object when you see a nose, eyes, forehead, a chin, and you can describe them. The best way of encountering the Other is not even to notice the colour of his eyes! When one observes the colour of the eyes one is not in social relationship with the Other. The relation with the face can surely be dominated by perception, but what is specifically the face is what cannot be reduced to that. (Levinas 1985, pp. 85–86)

Understood in this way, ‘the whole human body is in this sense more or less face’ (Levinas 1985, p. 99). The notion of the face of the other illustrates the difference between Kantian autonomy and Levinasian heteronomy. Furthermore, in the context of intercultural communication an understanding of the role of the other in shaping interaction is a crucial determinant in the task of redefining an idea of ethical responsibility that is based on the interdependence of self and other, and that emphasises the inter-of the intercultural, meaning its processual and embodied aspects. From this perspective, the notion of the face conveys the ethical effect of an encounter in which embodiment and corporeality reveal mortality and the vulnerability of existence, designating the other in his/her corporeality and indicating the proximity of the other person facing the self. Thus, obligation towards the other is not the result of a formal or procedural universalization of maxims, because ethics is lived in the corporeal obligation that originates from the immanent, here and now, meeting with the
other (Critchley 1999). In the presence of another being we are compelled to respond, although in relation to the phrase ‘straightaway ethical’ it does not imply necessarily a conception of ‘goodness’ as it is commonly used in reference to a moral judgment, rather it expresses the practical engagement established with an other in the praxis of everydayness and communication, which also harbours the possibility of hostility, fear, violence and even murderous intention. Indeed, Levinas articulates an ethical ambivalence inherent in the encounter with the other that includes the possibility of violence, “a desire to kill, an ethical necessity not to kill” (Butler 2010, p. 173). For Levinas this desire to kill, this violence, represents a modality of engagement in which the self dominates the other, encountered in the vulnerability of embodiment, as face. It is precisely this murderous impulse that defines the ethical dimension of alterity, since the face of the other poses the ethical challenge of resisting violence (“the Other is the only being I can wish to kill”, Levinas 1969, p. 198). According to Levinas (1985), an expression of this ethical ambivalence is found in the biblical moral imperative Thou shalt not kill: on the one side, because of its vulnerability, the face can generate a murderous impulse, on the other the face reminds the self of the interdiction to kill. In this sense, ethical engagement assumes a different connotation due to the acknowledgment of the possibility of miscommunication, misunderstanding and failure to establish dialogue, which is entailed in a conception of intercultural communication that recognises the dimension of risk taking and open ended engagement between self and other and, indeed, to recall Phipps, the fact that there are no ‘quick fixes’ to the endeavour of human understanding.

In this regard, the notion of sensibility, indicating the corporeal aspect of subjectivity from which the self encounters the other (Levinas 2008) replaces the notions of awareness and sensitivity that are commonly used in intercultural communication. Intercultural awareness describes a process of enlightenment that allows the self to uncover a higher truth that resolves all conflicting claims in the name of universal tolerance of the cultural other. Similarly, intercultural sensitivity indicates the ability to discriminate levels of cultural difference in order to interact effectively with others. Through the six stages of development of intercultural sensitivity—denial, defense reversal, minimization, acceptance, adaptation and integration (Bennett 1993), the individual becomes progressively accustomed to cultural difference, thus adjusting his/her perceptions and experiencing a reduction of uncertainty (Wiseman 2003; Hammer et al. 2003). Both notions of awareness and sensitivity follow the pattern of ethical autonomy.
delineated in reference to Kant, and depend on the idea of cultural difference as the principal obstacle to clear and unambiguous communication. With the notion of sensibility, Levinasian ethics suggests an alternative conceptualisation of the relation with the other, based on the perception of the embodied self in the ethical encounter. Whereas awareness and sensitivity develop in the ontological dimension of the self, sensibility represents the bodily aspect of experience and indicates a pre-reflective engagement with the other, meaning being affected by the presence of another. In this sense, the self as a sentient being is affected by the presence of the embodied other. This fact creates the preconditions for the development of an ethical concern for the other stemming from the ‘here and now’, meaning the immediacy of lived experience. The ethical, in other words, is embedded in the materiality with which the self is engaged in everyday existence,

We live from ‘good soup’, air, light, spectacles, work, ideas, sleep, etc… These are not objects of representations. We live from them. (Levinas 2008, p. 110)

Taking this materiality in consideration, it is important to highlight how this understanding of the ethical does not necessarily entail that engagement with the other is devoid of difficulties. On the contrary, it implies a traumatic element of discovery of the self as a sentient being who is faced with the ethical choice to respond to the presence of an other. This response, however, can assume the aspect of refusal of engagement, of fear or of misunderstanding. The crucial aspect is that this material presence of the other will pose ethical demands and ethical challenges, which the self is called to acknowledge.

**ASYMMETRY VS. SYMMETRY**

In the ethical relation described by Levinas (1985, 1998), the relation to the other lived as pure exteriority and obligation is devoid of any form of intentionality, for the self previously enclosed in the solitude of egoism and self-preservation is exposed to the other in an asymmetrical relation. Therefore, the self does not absorb and determine the meaning of the other, because the other escapes the play of the same, or the dialectic process through which the self reaffirms its own identity after representing and enveloping the other into a theme, or categories of knowledge,
recreating a totality. Although ontological thinking predominates in the tradition of Western philosophy, Levinas finds in the ethical relation with the other an originary form of thinking that ‘overflows the capacity of thought’ (1969, p. 49), adopting the idea of infinity that Descartes described in the Third Meditation. The argument of that meditation, aimed at establishing the existence of god by the fact that the idea of the infinite cannot have been generated by a finite being, is turned by Levinas to designate the encounter with the other in the form of irreducible alterity, “the relation with a being that maintains its total exteriority to him who thinks it” (1969, p. 50). Thus, the ethical relation assumes the character of responsibility when the self abdicates her/his sovereignty as thinking subject and answers to the other, meaning entering in a relation in which the self is not the master. In order to illustrate this asymmetrical relation, ethical responsibility is defined as a state of ‘insomnia or wakefulness’, a ‘perpetual state of vigilance and effort which can never slumber’ (Levinas 1969, p. 66) rather than an act proceeding from a fully bounded, rational, autonomous self. This state of vigilance described by Levinas is reminiscent of the messianism without religion of Derrida (1994) and the materialistic messianism of Benjamin (1999), in which the anticipation of an eschatological finality of messianic religions is abandoned in favour of a conception of temporality that contracts time in the here and now, in the immediacy of contact with the other. In the ethical relation described by Levinas, the self is not in control of the interaction, rather the interaction proceeds in an open-ended and unpredictable manner.

**Heteronomy vs. Autonomy**

In contrast to the idea of autonomy, the concept of heteronomy places subjectivity outside of the disembodied realm of the Cartesian ego into the phenomenal world, where it interacts with other selves to become an ethical being. In this context, ethical choices are made in relation to others, and not prior to the intersubjective relation. Thus, in contrast to the concept of autonomy, heteronomy indicates the central idea in Levinasian ethics that the self is not self-legislating, but is determined by the call of the other. In other words, the self acquires meaning through the intersubjective relations established with other selves, rather than through abstract notions related to transcendental conceptions of subjectivity. The principal issue in the opposition between the two concepts of heteronomy and autonomy is to establish whether ethical actions are determined by abstract universal rules, or whether they arise from immanent relations with others.
This means that the self is either a product of moral norms that belong to it transcendentally and that pre-exist its constitution as a subject, or that the self becomes an ethical being only in relation to others. In this last sense, the attention towards the immanent and the contingent that is behind the notion of the heteronomy of the self, leaves open the question of establishing a ground for moral accountability and moral agency that is universal and not tied to the particular (Butler 2005). The answer provided by Levinasian ethics is that the self acquires ethical significance only in relation to the other; prior to that the self exists in an ontological sense, as a being concerned primarily with its own perseverance in being, or conatus essendi. The ethical, in this context, originates outside of ontology and is otherwise than being (Levinas 1998). All questions relating to the social and the political, in short the aforementioned problem of universalism vs particularism, stem from the original relation to alterity, meaning the otherness of the other, that interrupts the solitude of the self and the disembodied, abstract I think.

This difference can be further illustrated in reference to the use of the term intercultural in intercultural communication. The contrast between heteronomy and autonomy becomes evident whether the emphasis is placed on the ‘inter’ or on the ‘cultural’: when the emphasis is placed on the ‘inter’, meaning processuality, interaction cannot be determined in advance, because it represents the result of the process itself, which is always in the immanent here and now. In the second instance, the focus on culture means that communication can be guided through the acquisition of competences, which determine the outcome of interaction. In this sense, the first relation is ethical, relational, open ended and heteronomous, whereas the second relation is ontological, autonomous and guided by the necessity of the self to determine outcomes through the use of cultural categorisation of the other. The metaphysics of presence manifested in the opposition between tolerance and intolerance appears in this conception of the self as the autonomous and self-governing individual of the Western liberal tradition. It is this autonomous self who exercises tolerance in welcoming the other conditionally, while retaining the right to withdraw the welcome accorded to the other. The conception of tolerance envisioned from the perspective of the autonomous self excludes the role of the other in interaction, positing subjectivity as independent from the influence of the external world. This reliance on the idea of tolerance leaves intercultural communication in an ethical conundrum in relation to the ability to engage dialogically with differing cultural and ethical frameworks. The complexity of intercultural communication surfaces when the

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ideals of autonomy and self-sufficiency of the self are destabilised by the material and embodied presence of the other. In this situation, understanding is deferred in the praxis of engagement between self and other. In this sense, the practice of deferred understanding addresses this conflict inherent in the notion of hospitality between tolerance and intolerance.

**Proximity vs. Distance**

Levinas subverts the traditional correlation between knowledge and being, dispossessing the ego of its privileged position as *res cogitans*, a thing that thinks. In his interpretation, knowledge appropriates and grasps otherness, reducing it to sameness through the act of transcendental apperception. He writes: *‘Knowledge as perception, concept, comprehension, refers back to an act of grasping’* (in Kearney and Rainwater 1996, p. 124). In this activity of appropriation of the known and reduction of alterity to sameness, the ego lives in the solitude of a ‘happy conscience’, disinterested and self-sufficient in its solipsism, leading to

full self-consciousness affirming itself as absolute being, and confirming itself as an I that, through all possible ‘differences’, is identified as master of its own nature as well as of the universe and able to illuminate the darkest recesses of resistance to its powers. (Levinas 1996, p. 127)

However, next to the transcendental ego of pure consciousness, Levinas distinguishes a non-intentional consciousness, or pre-intentional consciousness, which he describes using the words ‘stranger’, ‘countryless’ and ‘homeless’ (p. 129) to indicate a dimension of the self that does not reside under the bright light of intentional consciousness. In this realm of pre-intentional consciousness, ethics begins with the appearance of the face, in relation to otherness, which opens the possibility of conceiving a ‘freedom exterior to one’s own’ (Levinas 2006a, p. 14). This ego stripped of its transcendental sovereignty is defined by Levinas (1996) as *mauvaise conscience*, i.e. bad conscience, when the self discovers the guilt of the affirming subject and the need to answer for its right to be. This experience introduces the idea of responsibility and justice:

The human is the return to the interiority of nonintentional consciousness, to bad conscience, to its possibility of fearing injustice more than death, of preferring injustice undergone to injustice committed, and what justifies being to what guarantees it. (Levinas 2006a, p. 128)
This means that the encounter with the other generates the fear of violence and usurpation that the individual risks committing in his/her striving for self-preservation. Thus, the notion of proximity describes the conception of sociality that underpins the idea of the other, where proximity represents the modality that confers an ethical, and therefore ‘human’, status to the self. Once the basic relationship self-other has been established as the origin of the ethical mode of existence, Levinas introduces the notion of the third person, which enters and mediates the relationship between the individual and the other:

But we are never, me and the other, alone in the world. There is always a third: the men who surround me. And this third is also my neighbour. Who is the nearest to me? Inevitable question of justice which arises from the depth of responsibility for the unique, in which ethics begins in the face of that which is incomparable. Here is the necessity of comparing what is incomparable—of knowing men. First violence, violence of judgment, transformation of faces into objective and plastic forms, into figures which are visible but de-faced; the appearing of men: of individuals, who are certainly unique, but restituted to their genera. (Levinas 2001, pp. 115–116)

The entrance of this third person signifies the institution of laws and political systems that guarantee the rights of each individual, effacing the dyadic relation self-other. In this sense, the relationship between self and the other undergoes a transformation with the appearance of this third person, because the ethical relationship becomes political in the need to reconcile conflicting claims (Kearney 1984; Levinas 2006b). To this end, ethics ‘hardens its skin’ (Kearney 1984, p. 65) upon entering the political world of this impersonal third. Nevertheless, the ethical vocation of the self does not disappear in the formalisation of justice into a legal system, because ‘justice only has meaning if it retains the spirit of dis-interestedness which animates the idea of responsibility for the other man’ (Levinas 1985, p. 99). Consequently, a political order can be challenged in the name of this ethical responsibility towards the other. This introduction of symmetry in the relation with others through the notion of the third person becomes poignant in order to fully understand the concrete implications of ethical responsibility. The notion of individual responsibility should not be mistaken with a naïve negation of institutions and the state in favour of a form of voluntarism that relies on the goodwill of individuals. In fact, Levinas affirms the necessity to live in a world of citizens and not only in ‘the order
of the Face to Face’ (Levinas 2006a, p. 90), but it is essential to highlight the fact that individuals cannot abdicate entirely to the State their own duties of responsibility towards the other. In this context, the notion of responsibility expresses the ethical character of the infinite debt towards each singularity, or individual others, which Derrida (1988) defines undecidability, the fact that each decision represents a leap of faith made in relation to the singularity of a context (Critchley 1999). If the categorical imperative of Kantian moral law requires to measure a decision against a universal maxim, the idea of infinite responsibility arises from the context of a singular experience and acquires a universal character in the notion of the other’s infinite demand made on the individual. The passage from the solitude of the thinking self to the sociality that is established with the other encountered in her/his singularity is constituted through language, from the dimension of the said to that of the saying.

**Conclusion. Interculturality and the Distinction Between the Saying and the Said**

The two linguistic dimensions of the *saying* and the *said* coincide with two temporalities, the diachronic and the synchronic. The diachronic relates to the organization of perceptions and of experiences in a coherent temporal flow. In this temporality, language fixes the perceptions received from the external world into meaningful notions. The *said*, in other words, shapes and organises experiences into the know categories handed to the individual by the cultural milieu in which s/he is situated. Cultural traditions belong to this dimension of language, as available categories that allow consciousness to make sense of reality. In the diachronic dimension of temporality, the flow of time is interrupted by the other, of the embodied presence of the other person. If the *said* fixes meaning, the *saying* expresses another dimension of human expression, which is pre-linguistic. Rather than being opposed, the two linguistic dimensions are complementary: the event of the *saying* needs available categories in order to be processed by consciousness. However, the *saying* is never completely exhausted or grasped by the *said*. The *saying* represents an irreducible remainder of difference between the content of the *said* and what defies categorisation:

> It is only in the said that, in the epos of saying, the diachrony of time is synchronised into a time that is recallable, and becomes a theme. (…) But the signification of saying goes beyond the said. (Levinas 1998, p. 37)
The presence of the *saying* underlying the *said* challenges the idea of the transparency of language, or the perfect correspondence between word and meaning (Ferri 2014). This interplay between the two modalities of language, which represents Levinas’s ‘linguistic turn’ in this ethical philosophy, offers an interesting perspective for intercultural communication. One the one hand, meaning is fixed, resulting in essentialist categorising of the other; on the other, the ethical relation with the other is opened in open-ended dialogue. The latter modality of communication, however, requires that the self is prepared to renounce the tendency to establish an outcome to the encounter. The *saying*, in other words, is the meeting between self and other in speech, accepting the open-ended nature of the interaction, counter to the tendency in much intercultural communication research to fix meaning under the pre-established script of communicative competence and the effective transmission of content described in intercultural training. The unfolding of the *saying* in dialogue puts into question assumptions made in relation to the other, foregrounding reciprocal interaction between others. This ethical aspect of language, based on embodiment and presence to one another, throws the self in a situation which subverts pre-established categories and places communication in the realm of everyday contact and concern for the other, which Levinas illustrates in the most basic acts of politeness between two interlocutors:

In discourse I have always distinguished, in fact, between the *saying* and the *said*. That the *saying* must bear a *said* is a necessity of the same order as that which imposes a society with laws, institutions and social relations. But the *saying* is the fact that before the face I do not simply remain there contemplating it, I respond to it. The *saying* is a way of greeting the Other, but to greet the Other is already to answer for him. It is difficult to be silent in someone’s presence; this difficulty has its ultimate foundation in this signification proper to the saying, whatever is the said. It is necessary to speak of something, of the rain and fine weather, no matter what, but to speak, to respond to him and already to answer for him. (Levinas 1985, p. 88)

Interaction between embodied subjects is thus characterised by an ethical character that surfaces in communication, when concerns with reliability, effectiveness and performance are set aside in favour of concern for the other qua other.
Notes


References


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CHAPTER 4

Dwelling or Sojourning? Modalities of Interculturality

Abstract This chapter contrasts three models of competence: Deardorff’s pyramid model, the ICOPROMO project and Phipps’ notion of intercultural competence in terms of dwelling. It considers the ethical implications of Levinas’s reflection on the nature of language and on the relationship between self and other for the development of a framework that addresses the limitations of current conceptualisations of competence in intercultural communication. In particular, this chapter enters in a productive confrontation with Phipps and her notion of intercultural competence as dwelling. The main aim of this chapter is to propose a notion of the intercultural in terms of sojourning as more apt to describe the condition of precarity and ‘messiness’ of intercultural living.

Keywords Intercultural competence • Intercultural speaker • Pyramid model • Dialogic interculturalism • Otherness • Assessment of intercultural competence

INTRODUCTION

The present chapter problematizes the epistemological assumptions underpinning two intercultural competences frameworks as paradigmatic of a neo-essentialist approach to intercultural communication, namely Deardorff’s pyramid model (2006, 2009) and the ICOPROMO project (Glaser et al. 2007). To these two modes, an alternative understanding of
competence discussed in this chapter is based on the notion of dwelling (Phipps 2007), which illustrates a novel approach in presenting intercultural encounters as learning processes that lead to dwelling in previously unfamiliar cultural spaces. Through a critique of the discourse of effectiveness that characterises both Deardorff’s pyramid model and the ICOPROMO project, and the critical engagement with the Heideggerian underpinnings of Phipps’ notion of dwelling, this chapter introduces a conceptualisation of dialogic interaction that is situated in the –inter, or the immanent and processual space of the intercultural, thus emphasising the provisional and open-ended dimension of interaction. Phipps utilises the Heideggerian metaphor of language as a dwelling place, situating the activity of learning another language as preparation to dwell in a new place. As intended by Phipps, dwelling in a language represents the result of an intercultural experience that provides the language learner with a sense of the fleeting and fragile nature of communication between people who may not share the same cultural perspective. However, due to Heidegger’s conservative view of the inextricable bond between culture, language and soil as markers of a shared identity, this chapter proposes a notion of the intercultural in terms of sojourning (Cavell 1996, 2005), as more apt to capture the condition of precarity and ‘messiness’ of intercultural living described by Phipps.

**THE PYRAMID MODEL**

Deardorff (2006, 2009) provides a competence framework based on a pyramid model in which the main four elements are ordered hierarchically: attitudes, skills, knowledge, internal and external outcomes. All four elements are applied to guide and assess the development of intercultural competence in a variety of contexts. In the pyramid model, intercultural competence is defined in terms of effectiveness in communication achieved through the following:

- **Attitudes**: a combination of respect, openness and curiosity in showing interest in others and their cultures.
- **Knowledge**: in this model, culture is defined as a set of values, beliefs and norms held by a group of people. Culture shapes behaviour and consequently it influences interaction with others. Thus, from this perspective, competence requires the ability to understand the world from others’ perspectives.
• **Skills**: the skills required for the development of intercultural competences refer to the acquisition and processing of knowledge, the ability to observe, listen, evaluate, analyse, interpret and relativise.

• **Internal outcomes**: ideally, the combination of attitudes, knowledge and skills lead to flexibility, adaptability, ethnorelativity and empathy, meaning the ability to respond to others according to the ways in which they desire to be treated.

• **External outcomes**: here, communicative behaviour can be assessed in determining how effectively and appropriately the individual performs in intercultural situations, particularly in showing cultural sensitivity and adherence to cultural norms.

The framework describes language as a vehicle to understand others’ worldviews, so that an ideal place for the development of intercultural competence is the foreign language classroom, where it is possible to graduate ‘global ready students who are not only fluent in another language but who can also successfully navigate other cultures’ (Deardorff 2006, p. 42).

The assessment of competence relating to this pyramid model is based on:

• Prioritising goals relating to intercultural communication competence: goals can be set in advance according to purpose, ‘to determine which specific elements of intercultural competence should be the focus of programmatic efforts and assessment endeavors’ (Deardorff 2011, p. 72).

• Setting realistic and measurable outcomes through a multimethod and multiperspective plan. This means collecting a range of evidence both direct and indirect (Deardorff 2016).

• Collecting direct evidence in the form of learning contracts, e-portfolios including reflection papers, photos and other documentation of learning, critical reflection which pushes learners to move beyond descriptive reflection, and finally performance in intercultural situations. Indirect evidence is collected through surveys, interviews and focus groups (Deardorff 2016).

The final outcome of this process of acquisition of competences allows the self to move from the personal level, represented by attitudes, to an inter-personal and interactive level. This conclusion, however, poses an epistemological issue residing in the passage from an autonomous, monocultural self to inter-relationality that occurs as the result of the acquisition
of skills. In fact, although the acquisition of the required attitudes leads to appropriate cultural behaviours in intercultural situations, the role of the other in shaping competence is neglected in the emphasis placed on skills and measurable, realistic outcomes. As a consequence, what Deardorff interprets as inter-relationality stands for a change in behaviour generating from a static notion of culture occurring after the acquisition of competences, rather than through a process of transformation originating from the ‘inter’, the processual act of interaction. This point is evident in relation to the issue of a Western bias in the pyramid model, which is acknowledged through the notion of relationality between Western and non-Western perspectives and the integration of these relational aspects beyond the knowledge, skills and attitudes delineated in the pyramid model. A relational model of competence from this perspective is organised according to the abstract notions of a Western self and a non-Western other, and the acquisition of separate skill-sets needed in interaction in order to demonstrate a degree of reciprocal adaptation. However, the acquisition of this global model of competence neglects the two dimensions of symbolic power and the symbolic capital (Bourdieu 1991) attached to learning a foreign language, notably English (Pennycook 2007).

With post-structuralist theory the notion of discourse becomes prominent in regard to the role of language in society and in establishing a relation between knowledge and power. As Fairclough argues, language and power are closely connected parts of a wider network, which includes the practices and institutions that produce societal formations. Power exercised through the use of language with the “manufacture of consent” (Fairclough 1989, p. 4), is opposed to the exercise of power through coercion. According to Foucault (1977) power is a pervasive practice that operates within institutional apparatuses to produce control. In this sense, discourse is not strictly linguistic, but it comprises all the social practices that combine to create an object of knowledge. The notion of symbolic capital attached to the use of English is particularly relevant in the two models of intercultural competence examined in this chapter. The concept of symbolic capital elaborated by Bourdieu (1991), compares linguistic exchange to an economic exchange, in the sense that words are not only signs that convey meanings, but they also represent a linguistic capital. Words are ‘signs of wealth intended to be evaluated and appreciated’ and ‘signs of authority intended to be believed and obeyed’ (Bourdieu 1991, p. 66). In this ideological context, the dominant linguistic competence
represents the most valuable linguistic capital with the highest symbolic profit. For Bourdieu, the prestige associated with the use of a dominant form of language is the result of social mechanisms, which are reproduced by institutional powers. In particular, the educational system is invested with the specific role of divulging the standard variety of a national language, thus establishing a ‘hierarchy of linguistic practices’ (Bourdieu 1991, p. 49). The value attached to linguistic practices is therefore the result of habitus, a learned process that takes shape first within the sphere of the family, or ‘primary market’, and subsequently in other ‘markets’, notably schools, where the primary model can either be valued or devalued, if not conform to the dominant linguistic practices. In this process, language becomes a linguistic capital and schools are placed in a central position in the reproduction of the ideology of a standard, unitary, correct language. This domination is achieved not through overt coercion but it is transmitted in the ordinary aspects of everyday life, to the extent that the idea of a standard and correct language becomes a self evident and transparent idea that requires no further investigation. This unquestioned status of language in the pyramid model, particularly the symbolic capital of English, recalls Cameron’s argument that language is treated as a given entity, ‘like the mythical turtle that supports the world on his back’ (Cameron 2006, p. 143). In a similar fashion, Deardorff does not explain the contextual reasons that bring individual language users to subscribe to the dominant ideology that underpins the notions of effectiveness and reliability of communicative competence. While language is a vehicle for the fashioning and expression of ideologies, it is at the same time shaped by social and ideological forces, as argued by Voloshinov (1972), meaning that signs are multi-accented, reflecting the different social positions occupied by individual speakers. From this perspective, the apparent consensus surrounding language hides ‘the reality of continual struggle over the sign’ (Voloshinov 1972, p. 144), generated by the material differences existing between social groups. Adopting this relational and contested view of language, it can be argued that the Pyramid competence model posits language as expression of an abstract monocultural speaker, while the complexity entailed in the relation between speakers and the language employed in communication is reduced to the effects of miscommunication due to cultural difference.
The ICOPROMO Project

As in the pyramid model, responding to the necessities of global trade represents a major preoccupation in the ICOPROMO model (Glaser et al. 2007). However, the ICOPROMO project combines the preoccupation with professional development in competitive markets and the idea of transformation. Indeed, this model of competence is defined ‘transformational’ because it articulates the journey the individual undergoes when becoming aware of intercultural challenges as a result of his/her mobility or that of others with whom he/she must communicate effectively. (Glaser et al. 2007, p. 15)

Both the ICOPROMO and the pyramid training programs are targeted at educators and facilitators working with undergraduate, graduate students and professionals to help them develop language and cultural awareness that will facilitate interaction in intercultural situations. The transformational journey of the individual towards the acquisition of competences is represented by a traffic light in which the individual is initially positioned on the red light prior to the development of intercultural skills, moving to the amber and green lights once he/she becomes able to interact effectively with cultural difference. The theoretical premise of this journey is individuated by the authors in the necessities presented by the ‘new world order’, meaning the global flows of trade and communication which in their account has exposed individuals to a higher intensity of cultural difference and consequently to challenges that are linguistic, cultural and emotional (Ferri 2016, p. 65). The authors employ the term ‘monocultural identity’ (Glaser et al. 2007, p. 16), indicating the programmatic aim to cause an attitudinal change towards the other and to cope with cultural difference in the background of global challenges. Bringing about attitudinal and behavioural changes, requires increased awareness of the self and the other, the acquisition of cultural knowledge, sense-making, perspective-taking, relationship building, and interestingly the ability to assume social responsibility. This complex of skills results in intercultural mobility, or ‘the ability to interact effectively in intercultural professional contexts’ (Glaser et al. 2007, p. 17). This transformational model finds its theoretical underpinning in field theory (Lewin 1935), which relates behaviour to the interaction between personality and environmental pressures. Intercultural training inherits from field theory the idea that
behaviour can be influenced through tailored intervention. In this competence framework, the first step is represented by a developing awareness of self and other, dealing in the specific with culture shock or ‘cultural fatigue’ (Glaser et al. 2007, p. 31) resulting from a first encounter with cultural difference. According to the idea of culture shock, being exposed to a different culture leads to miscommunication and conflict, requiring the ability to develop sense-making and interpreting, and the ability of meaning-making, as well as the skill to identify and understand values and beliefs. Moreover, perspective-taking allows individuals to look at reality from different viewpoints, to develop empathy and tolerance, flexibility and the ability to decentre. At this stage, effective intercultural communication results intercultural mobility (Glaser et al. 2007, p. 43) although, according to the authors, this mobility needs to be contextualised within a broader project of democratic citizenship, which promotes intercultural interaction and dialogue in complex societies and emerging communities created by intercultural contact (see Ferri 2016, p. 65).

The Idealised Intercultural Speaker in the Pyramid Model and the ICOPROMO Project

The problematization of the pyramid model of competence and the ICOPROMO project highlights a number of issues that relate to their epistemological and ontological assumptions as illustrated in Table 4.1, with the sequence of the acquisition of competences employed in both models. A problematic aspect in these formulations of intercultural communicative competence is represented by the emphasis placed on the consciousness of the intercultural speaker, which focuses on the cultural divide between self and other. Communication is examined in reference to awareness of cultural differences and with the use of neutral, scientific vocabulary, expressed

Table 4.1 Sequence of acquisition of competences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motivation to become interculturally competent</th>
<th>Skills</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Global trade</td>
<td>To acquire knowledge of another culture and the patterns of behaviour associated with it</td>
<td>Effectiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need to become competitive</td>
<td>To relativise and dispel stereotypes attributed to the cultural other</td>
<td>Cultural sensitivity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response to culture shock</td>
<td></td>
<td>Tolerance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Transformation</td>
</tr>
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</table>
in the language employed in intercultural training such as competence, skills, training and effectiveness (e.g. Hofstede and Hofstede 2004; Deardorff 2006, 2009; Spencer-Oatey and Stadler 2009). This emphasis on consciousness and on a functional, instrumental understanding of communication influences the ways in which ethical responsibility is understood in intercultural research (e.g. in Guilherme et al. 2010). The transformation of the self into a responsible, intercultural being is presented as a process beginning in a fully bounded individual who acquires the necessary competences to deal with the initial cultural shock that occurs as a consequence of the encounter with another culture. Following the acquisition of competence, not only the individual is then able to deal effectively and sensitively towards the cultural other, but is also able to display varying degrees of criticality and responsibility in dealing with members of other cultures. This ideal of individual autonomy emerges in both frameworks in the shape of a self-sufficient and self-governing individual, leaving unexamined the role of the other in interaction.

From this perspective, although the dimension of critical intercultural citizenship developed by Guilherme (2002) is included in the ICOPROMO project, and a critical approach to a static vision of culture is advocated in Deardorff’s model, the practical necessity to become competitive in the global market is taken as the principal element that guides the epistemological assumptions underpinning both frameworks, which relate to the conception of the self as an autonomous being. This stance is illustrated by Deardorff in reference to intercultural learning and intercultural courses in further education as a means to equip students for a ‘more global, interdependent world’.

How can we prepare our students to comprehend the multitude of countries and cultures that may have an impact on their lives and careers? More broadly, what knowledge, skills, and attitudes do our students need if they are to be successful in the twenty-first century? (…) Beyond integration of intercultural competence outcomes within courses, it is important to understand that intercultural learning is transformational learning, which requires experiences (often beyond the classroom) that lead to this transformation. (…) To this end, service learning and education abroad become two mechanisms by which students’ intercultural competence can be further developed, leading to students’ transformation. (Deardorff 2011, pp. 69–70)

The role of global trade is acknowledged as the initiating force behind the development of intercultural training programmes and creates what
Holliday (2011) defines in terms of a reification of intercultural training and the creation of a product, which is marketed as intercultural competence. In this way, the intercultural process is presented as the meeting of separate cultural entities, and the role of the intercultural trainer is to facilitate and provide the tools to help navigate and interpret behaviour as expression of cultural difference. The starting point in this process is represented by the notion of culture shock, or cultural fatigue, which is assumed to initiate the transformational process that changes the individual from monocultural to an interculturally competent entity. The idea of culture shock derives from anthropology and the four stages of adaptation identified by Oberg (1960), beginning with the honeymoon stage during initial contact with a different culture, followed by negative feelings of anxiety, rejection, anger and frustration, ending with adjustment and finally adaption to the new culture. This concept of culture shock has been widely criticised, although it has become embedded in popular consciousness and it is widely used to designate the shock upon encountering an ‘exotic’ culture (Kuppens and Mast 2012). In this sense, what is described in terms of culture shock hides the complexity of factors that influence communication in intercultural encounters, so that miscommunication due to lack of sociolinguistic competence in the use of a dominant language, low socio-economic status, power imbalance and ideological constructs of culture, are all attributed to cultural difference. Therefore, when culture becomes the principal explanatory category to understand intercultural communication, the notion of competence is presented as a fix, a set of tools that the individual can utilise to become tolerant and understanding of other cultural beings in the context of a globalised neo-liberal market, here understood in terms of the deterritorialised flows of global trade illustrated in Hardt and Negri (2000) and Harvey (2005), characterised by competitiveness and the necessity to interact effectively. Crucially, the focus on cultural difference prevalent in intercultural training, based on the notion of cultural shock experienced by the individual, leaves unaccounted for that aspect of globalisation which relates to power and cultural capital, or global flows of ‘interested knowledge, hegemonic power, and cultural capital’ (Kumaravadivelu 2006, p. 1). In other words, it neglects the socio/cultural distinctions of global capitalism. The neo-essentialist dichotomy between a Western perspective on the one side, and a separate cultural block that includes all non-Western cultures on the other, is resonant of the opposition noted by Holliday (2011) between the dominant, hegemonic discourses of the West and the process of othering
towards peripheral discourses emanating from non-Western perspectives. In other words, the hegemonic discourses of the West position their own production of knowledge in superior and often ‘scientific’ terms, whilst alternative discourses are interpolated as cultural products of the ‘other’, in a dynamic that recalls Spivak’s (2004) notion of epistemic violence. As such, these peripheral and non-Western perspectives are invoked from a neo-essentialist position in the name of the ideal of universal tolerance of the other, reduced to an idealised intercultural speaker. When the empirical observation of intercultural interlocutors is abstracted from the underlying social relations and hegemonic structures that are at play during communication, it generates the idealistic notion of a competent intercultural speaker, which represents a mystification of the social relations at play during communicative interactions. The term mystification is employed here in relation to the concept of commodity fetishism (Marx 1974), according to which a commodity is understood in terms of its monetary value as the universal equivalent for exchange and not as the product of a specific set of social relations of production. Thus commodities acquire an intrinsic value that mystifies their material character, the fact that they are the product of human labour,

It is precisely this finished form of the world of commodities—the money form—which conceals the social character of private labour and the social relations between the individual workers, by making those relations appear as relations between material objects, instead of revealing them plainly. (Marx 1974, p. 78)

Similarly, the ideal of a competent intercultural speaker endowed with the characteristics of tolerance, flexibility, reflexivity, ability to decentre and open mindedness hides the material conditions in which the individual is embedded. This idealistic notion of a competent intercultural speaker is often articulated in the literature on intercultural competence as an individual learning discovery of the aforementioned intercultural characteristics, e.g. Deardorff (2006) and Wiseman (2003) in reference to the development of intercultural competence; Chen and Starosta (1998, 2000), McAllister et al. (2006), Guilherme et al. (2010), Jackson (2011) in relation to the acquisition of intercultural sensitivity and the development of reflexivity. As a consequence of this process of mystification, these characteristics become transcendental categories, meaning that their acquisition becomes necessary in order to gain the status of competent
intercultural speaker. In other words, the definition of the competent intercultural speaker is established apriori through categories that render possible its constitution as an object of experience. This process, however, relates to idealised individuals who exhibit the desired characteristics whilst embarking on a journey of intercultural learning, in which the outcome has been delineated in advance as the achievement of intercultural competence in terms of discovery of other cultural perspectives, the development of tolerance and the ability to shift cultural perspectives.

**INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE AS DWELLING**

In contrast to both the pyramid model and the ICOPROMO project, Phipps (2007) emphasises messiness, unpredictability and the embodied nature of languages in specific cultural contexts as cultural artefacts and markers of identity. This notion of messiness proposed by Phipps contrasts with the idea of culture shock described in reference to the Pyramid model and the ICOPROMO project. On the one side, the idea of culture shock expresses the experience of intercultural encounters as a problem, a potential source of incomprehension and difficulty. On the other, messiness articulates the uncertainty and the precariousness of interculturality in terms of an existential challenge in which the self discovers uncharted possibilities. In developing the notion of dwelling, Phipps utilises the Heideggerian metaphor of language as a dwelling place, describing the activity of learning another language as preparation to dwell in a new place. As intended by Phipps, dwelling in a language represents the result of an intercultural experience that provides the language learner with a sense of the fleeting and fragile nature of communication between people who may not share the same cultural perspective. Languages are fully embodied entities, artefacts that function as markers of identity not reducible to a set of skills to be mastered through the acquisition of grammatical competence. Reflecting on both traditional (e.g. Hall, Hofstede) and critical (e.g. Byram, Guilherme) accounts of intercultural communication, Phipps argues against the tendency to search for ‘a quick fix’ to conflicts that arise in intercultural contexts. According to Phipps, only partial and situated answers can be found ‘in the quick human relatedness, in the contexts of neighbourliness and of learning together as an everyday process of dwelling in the real world’ (2007, p. 26). From this perspective, learning languages and experiencing communication across distinct traditions is not a problem in need of ‘technological fixes’ (Phipps 2007, p. 23), but an
occasion to acquire a dwelling perspective, ‘one which is heavier, messier, requires time to be taken in and with languages, people and praxis’ (ibid.). Despite the evident merits of such a perspective, Heidegger’s view of the inextricable bond between culture, language and soil as markers of a shared identity, presents a number of conceptual issues worth examining.

Heidegger’s wider concerns regarding the relationship between being and Dasein (or the individual as being-in-the-world, designating the concrete structure of human beings in their predominant state of ‘everydayness’) permeate his reflections on language. It is through language that Dasein becomes the guardian, or the “shepherd” of being: language intended as poetic creation discloses the ontological nature of the Dasein in harbouring the meaning of being. However, this authentic relationship of the Dasein with language has been lost as a result of the oblivion of being in Western philosophy: ‘Man acts as though he were the shaper and master of language, while in fact language remains the master of man’ (Heidegger 1971, p. 146). According to this theory, the primordial and true character of language is to be found in dwelling, in letting the meaning emerge from everyday objects through the bond that exists between a language and its own place of dwelling. The Heideggerian notion of dwelling refers to the Old English and High German word Buan, which means to remain, to stay in a place:

The way in which you are and I am, the manner in which we humans are on the earth, is Buan, dwelling. To be a human being means to be on the earth as a mortal. It means to dwell. The old word bauen, which says that man is insofar as he dwells, this word bauen however also means at the same time to cherish and protect, to preserve and care for, specifically to till the soil, to cultivate the vine. (Heidegger 1971, p. 147)

Heidegger contrasts calculative thinking, which predominates in modern scientific thought, to meditative thinking and attributes the former to the condition of homelessness of modernity and the latter to dwelling in a native soil, claiming that the rootedness and the autochthony of man are threatened by industrialization,

Many Germans have lost their homeland, have had to leave their villages and towns, have been driven from their native soil. (…) They have been caught in the turmoil of the big cities, and have resettled in the wastelands of industrial districts. They are strangers now to the former homeland. (Heidegger 1966, p. 48)
In this reading of modernity, man is alienated from this fertile contact with the native soil, and language has become a mere tool for instrumental thinking, leading to alienation and inauthenticity. It seems thus, that in acknowledging the often contradictory and situated nature of communication, and the impossibility to achieve a formula that would clear all misunderstanding and miscommunication in intercultural situations, Phipps has not readily accounted for Heidegger’s rhetorical and nationalistic use of the notion of a bond between soil and language (see also Levinas 1990; Adorno 2003; Gauthier 2011 on this issue). Although in her interpretation Phipps emphasises the existential dimension of language as a marker of identity that is fluid and embodied rather than nationalistic or identitarian, it can be argued whether the Heideggerian notion of dwelling best describes a non-essentialist understanding of intercultural communication. Both Levinas (1990) and Adorno (2003) have addressed the problematic nature of the bond between language and dwelling, the former confronting the dichotomy between native and strangers that stems from the idea of dwelling and the latter with an analysis of the language employed by Heidegger.

Adorno describes the language employed by Heidegger in terms of ‘jargon’, referring to the aura that emanates from the a-historical and decontextualized repetition of a limited number of words which acquire the character of essences tinged with the aura of transcendental revelation, particularly the terminology regarding being (which is capitalised in Heideggerian texts), existence and authenticity (Adorno 2003; Hearfield 2004). For Adorno, this use of language creates the sense of a mythical past that inspires reverence and, as a consequence, it cancels the mediation of the thinking subject in the dialectic between word and thing, providing the illusion that words appear from a higher dimension to that of the empirical world. Adorno attacks the idea of rootedness and its expression in the archaic, poetic language to which Heidegger recurs in order to illustrate the relatedness between dwelling, authentic thinking and language, describing it as ‘washed out clichés in plough-and-furrow novels (...)’; continuing:

Whoever is forced by the nature of his work to stay in one place, gladly makes a virtue out of necessity. He tries to convince himself and others that his bound-ness is of a higher order. (Adorno 2003, pp. 44–45)

The critique of the ontological significance of place and native soil, or autochthony, is further elaborated by Levinas in reference to dwelling as
the place where the wanderer finds refuge. In this reading, Heidegger’s vision of rootedness creates a dichotomy between natives and strangers,

One’s implementation in a landscape, one’s attachment to place, without which the universe would become insignificant and would hardly exist, is the very splitting of humanity into natives and strangers. (Levinas 1990, p. 232)

Furthermore, whereas Heidegger laments technological advancement, Levinas welcomes technology which ‘wrenches us out of the Heideggerian world and the superstitions regarding Place’ (Levinas 1990, p. 232; capitalisation in original). In line with Adorno’s critique, Levinas describes with irony the transcendent use of everyday language and the rediscovery of the holy aspect hiding beneath the mundane that, according to Heidegger, allows the ineffable to become manifest,

to follow a path that winds its way through fields, to feel the unity created by the bridge, the bridge that links the two river banks and by the architecture of buildings, the presence of a tree, the chiaroscuro, the forests, the mystery of things, of a jug, of worn out shoes of a peasant girl, the gleam from a carafe of wine sitting on a tablecloth. (Levinas 1990, p. 232)

This archaic portrait exaggerates Heideggerian language, evoking a return to the true significance of being gleaming behind everyday objects in their authentic relationship with place. Heidegger’s return to an originary understanding of the truth of being is replaced by Levinas with a departure from ontological thinking- or thinking about being, to ethical thinking, in particular the ethical necessity of welcoming the other unconditionally. If being builds and cultivates (Heidegger 1971), in Levinas the thinking subject is destabilised by the arrival of the other, who poses the ethical demand that dwelling becomes a place of unconditional welcome. This form of ethical thinking opposes Heidegger’s philosophy of place and rootedness with a philosophy of the ‘émigré’, which establishes the dignity of those who leave their native soil,

He or she who emigrates is fully human: the migration of man does not destroy, does not demolish the meaning of being. (Levinas 2006, p. 101)

The philosophy of the migrant, developed in Levinas’s Talmudic writings (1994, 2007) into a wider reflection on the significance of cities as places
of refuge for the exiles and the oppressed fleeing persecution (Eisenstadt 2003), can be contrasted to Heidegger’s longing for a return to the authenticity of a native soil. Although this ethics of hospitality (Derrida 2000, 2001) reflects the aporia between the ideal of unconditional welcome and the reality of legal and political limitations, it represents nevertheless a promise of deferred justice, or an ideal that ought to guide ethical reflection. In this manifestation of the other as hospitality towards the émigré resides the essence of language as sociality and ethical commitment to dialogue: ‘it puts in common a world hitherto mine’ (Levinas 2008, p. 174). This intersubjectivity has been described as saying in Chap. 3 (Levinas 1998): language is not the expression of a higher truth of being that is disclosed through an authentic bond with a native soil, rather language establishes sociality in the form of dialogic interaction. Dialogue as saying challenges Heidegger’s notion of language as the source of the meaning of being in virtue of its rootedness in a native soil, and the idea of awakening to an authentic form of language that lay dormant underneath its everyday and mundane use. Thus, with the notion of saying it is possible to eschew the conception of the naturalness of a native language as it appears in Heidegger, accompanied by the benign image of a mother tongue that we use naturally from birth in virtue of its belonging to a place of dwelling. In this context, Cavell’s (2005) attempt to reconcile the union of dwelling, thinking and language with the philosophy of the ‘émigré’, rescues the idea from the rhetoric of rootedness and authenticity in favour of a more dynamic understanding of dwelling as ‘living lightly’ and being prepared ‘for departure and the new’ (Standish and Cavell 2012, p. 169). Cavell, reflecting on both Heidegger’s and Thoreau’s depictions of land in terms of settling, ploughing, growing, tending and care, contrasts two modalities of dwelling: the transcendent emphasis on the fulfillment of destiny of Dasein through the authentic relationship with the native land that is so important to Heidegger, and the worldly tending of the land in Walden, the character in Thoreau’s novel (1995), through the modality of ‘sojourning’,

The river poetizes the human being because, in providing ‘the unity of locality and journeying’, it conceals and reveals Dasein’s being and becoming ‘homely’, ‘homelike’, I might say homebound. Walden’s word for maintaining something like this unity, in its opening paragraph, is ‘sojourning’, living each day, everywhere and nowhere, as a task and an event. (Cavell 2005, p. 229)
Cavell here recognises the fundamental human need to dwell and inhabit, to be at home, but points at the same time to “the essential immigrancy of the human” (2005, p. 229), or the fact that dwelling is a precarious state that can be interrupted both voluntarily and through forced exile in the events of war and political upheaval. Returning to Phipps’ notion of learning a language as finding a new place of dwelling, it can be argued that the experience of learning a new language rather than being comparable to finding a new dwelling is more akin to a displacement of the familiar and to an awakening that reveals the arbitrariness of language itself, its socially constructed nature and its internal stratification (Bakhtin 1981), or to use Phipps’ terminology, its messiness and embodied character. According to Cavell (2005), there are three modes of understanding in relation to culture:

**The patriotic**, based on the notion of native soil.  
**The cosmopolitan**, which seeks the common principle of humanity.  
**The multiculturalist**, funded on the principle of the politics of recognition and the comparison between cultural traditions.

A common pitfall of all three approaches, argues Cavell, is the contrasting relationship established between the native and the foreign, whether in view of a form of solidarity between different nations (the patriotic), of fusion (the cosmopolitan) or harmony (the multiculturalist). What is missing is an interrogation of the familiar and what is “allegedly native to us (…)” or, more specifically, an understanding of the problematic nature of the concept of a native language with its accompanying cultural identity that, when scrutinised closely, reveals a “sense of the rivenness of home, the rift within ourselves” (Cavell 1996, p. 134). In other words, beneath the surface of cultural identity and language resides this internal split of the self, the fact that what we call home “cannot be a stable shelter” because we are in a state of immigrancy from the start (ibid.). This means that, although we are born into a language community from which we acquire social meanings, we live from the beginning in a process of translation, in negotiating the modalities in which the language and the conventions of the community are appropriated in unique ways. In this sense, we are never at home within a cultural tradition, but we live in a state of translation and migration, in constant tension between freedom and tradition. This existential fact of incompleteness of self and other, according to Saito (2009, 2015), is reflected in the practice of linguistic translation, particularly when
untranslatable words and concepts surface in the course of linguistic exchange. According to Saito, this experiencing of the unfamiliar through linguistic exchange is comparable to a re-engagement with the ordinary from a new perspective. This means that words and concepts that have become common currency in everyday usage are rediscovered in translation. Furthermore, Saito extends the notion of translation to intra-linguistic contexts, arguing that due to the lack of transparency between words and their meanings the lives of human beings are always in a process of translation. Similarly, Derrida (1998) employs the notion of translation to question the concepts of cultural identity and native language, interrogating the notion of native language, due to the precarious nature of cultural identity granted in virtue of belonging to a linguistic group. Due to the paradoxical situation of speaking a language that does not belong to us, because it was inherited from a linguistic community, language is not a natural entity, a mother tongue that belongs naturally to a speaking subject, it is rather a phantasm of possession that in its more extreme manifestations becomes the symbol of appropriation that motivates nationalist aggression and ‘monoculturalist homo-hegemony’ (Derrida 1998, p. 64), or identitarian hegemony. In this Derridean perspective, language is not a property, it cannot be possessed, stemming from a source that is ever-receding: the phrase ‘prosthesis of origin’ (Derrida 1998) indicates precisely this impossibility to establish an origin of language, a mother tongue viewed as a natural entity possessed by individual speaking subjects (Wortham 2010). The notions of sojourning and incompleteness allow to reconfigure the relationship between self and other in terms of a relationship between two others. Understood in this manner, intercultural encounters become an opportunity to discover the incompleteness of the self and to accept that the other can never be fully grasped. In other words, the intercultural is reconfigured in terms of dialogic interaction.

A Dialogic Understanding of Interaction

Dialogism addresses three aspects of intercultural communication: the interdependence of self/other, the acceptance of uncertainty and finally an understanding of power relations. In this sense, this understanding of interaction is processual, contextual and multiperspectival. The processual aspect relates to the ‘inter’ of interculturality, the fact that meanings are constructed in interaction during communicative exchanges. The multiperspectival indicates that all three elements (interdependence self/other,
acceptance of uncertainty and awareness of power) are necessary in order to define dialogic interaction, as opposed to the acquisition of separate, discrete skills prior to interaction, which are employed in instrumental models of competence to guide communicative exchanges starting from a pre-defined image of the other.

**The Processual**

The starting point in delineating the broad features a dialogic model of interaction is that the individual is not a monocultural entity. It is an accepted argument in academic research that identity is not monolithic, but it is ever-evolving and influenced by a variety of multiple allegiances and group memberships, and therefore it is not exhausted by narrow definitions of cultural belonging confined within the category of national identity (see Hall and du Gay 1996; Hall 1997). However, although the notion of multifaceted belonging moves away from culturalism in terms of the assignment of fixed cultural identities, the danger is that in the theorisation of intercultural competence behaviour is still explained in cultural terms, albeit within a conception of culture that is more dynamic and flexible (Dervin et al. 2011). Following from this, it can be assumed that behaviour is determined by the context of interaction and not by culture, and that the development of dialogic intercultural interaction is dependent on the recognition of the following three factors that influence dialogue: the interdependence of self and other, ideological constructions of culture, and power imbalance.

*The Interdependence of Self and Other* As argued in Chap. 3, the modality of the *said* (Levinas 1998) can be used as an interpretive category to describe the essentialist categorisation of the other and the fixing of meaning and outcomes in intercultural encounters. Under this interpretative category, observing the other through the lenses of reliability and validity in pursuit of a form of transparent communication forecloses the possibility of creating new meanings in interaction. When in the modality of the *said*, the self is in control of the interaction. However, the other modality of discourse named *saying* by Levinas, indicates that the self renounces control in favour of unpredictability. Encountering the other in this modality engenders an existential experience which, as discussed in Chap. 3, can be described in terms of accusativity, or when other exceeds the categories of representation. In this mode of interaction, the other remains
other, as reciprocal engagement stems from the experiential sphere of practical and embodied engagement. The other is not reduced to the categories of understanding of the self, as she is encountered in the here and now, entailing a type of engagement that is immanent and rooted in embodiment of self and other.

_Ideological Constructions of Culture_ The recognition of the interdependence of self and other in constructing an intercultural space requires that the notion of culture is carefully deconstructed. In particular, the dichotomy between Western and non-Western perspectives, and the attribution of culture as a characteristic of the other. This phenomenon, whereby individuals are deemed to be determined by their own culture, is defined with the term culturalism by Eriksen and Stjernfelt (2012). Culturalism has become a political ideology in both right wing politics and left wing multiculturalism (Eriksen and Stjernfelt 2009), meaning that culture is mobilised to reinforce nationalist politics through the ideological use of the notion of defence of national values against alien cultures. At the same time, culture is employed to force people into cultural identities in the name of pluralism, tolerance and the multicultural idea of the coexistence of separate cultures. Gillespie, Howarth and Cornish (2012, p. 393) argue that social categories such as culture, which are employed to categorise individuals, are not fixed and stable entities but they are perspectival, reflecting ‘the pluralism of the social world’ and the impossibility to establish scientifically ‘true’ social categories. From this perspective, by emphasising the inter, or the processual and immanent aspect of the intercultural, individuals negotiate their own positioning during communicative exchanges instead of enacting a fixed, static cultural identity. This aspect, however, brings to light another dimension, that of power imbalance between interactants in communication.

_Power Imbalance Between Interactants_ This dimension is dependent on sociolinguistic competence in the use of the language of interaction, for example in situations where the exchange happens between native and non-native speakers, or between speakers using a lingua franca (Byram and Zarate 1997). Moreover, the choice that determines the language of interaction reflects positions of hegemony and perceived superiority of one dominant language, for example international English, over other languages.
This power imbalance in communication is described by Hymes (1996) as a dynamic through which language becomes an instrument that recreates structural inequality.

**CONTEXT**

The context of interaction is determined by the ways in which interlocutors are positioned: the language being used, their competence in the language of interaction, and the relationships between interlocutors taking part in the communicative exchange. In other words, the setting of a communicative event is not only influenced by language, but also by the ways in which the participants are positioned in relation to other factors such as gender, class, social status and other social categories independently of language use (Regan et al. 2009). Among these categories culture is crucial, particularly the phenomenon of culturalism, meaning the ways in which interlocutors are assigned a cultural identity or choose to act a cultural identity. Holliday (2011) defines culture as a discursive production which expresses how individuals socially construct an image of the cultural resources available to them and, consequently, ‘they may play up and exaggerate various aspects of cultural resources available to them’ (p. 144). Thus, it is important to define context not as static but as emergent, dynamic and negotiated by the participants in the interaction (Regan et al. 2009). For all the above reasons, an appreciation of context in intercultural communicative exchanges is a crucial element in the acquisition of dialogic intercultural competence. Moreover, the influence of language in the context of interaction is an aspect that has been often overlooked in intercultural communication (Dervin and Liddicoat 2013) and consequently in models of intercultural competence. Although the politics of language teaching and the Savoirs as sociocultural competence (Byram and Zarate 1997; Byram and Risager 1999), the idea of languaging (Phipps and Gonzalez 2004), and the notion of the multilingual subject (Kramsch 2009) address the issue of intercultural language teaching and learning, culture remains prominent in analysing phenomena related to understanding and interaction between members from different countries. This issue has been addressed first by Scollon and Scollon (1995), and subsequently Blommaert (1998) and Piller (2011), who have focused on the impact of sociolinguistic competence in the language of interaction as the principal cause of misunderstanding and miscommunication in intercultural communication. As Piller suggests, because context is an emergent and dynamic process.
which is negotiated by all participants, the ‘messiness’ of actual interactions (Phipps 2007) demonstrates the limitations of attempts to understand and regulate communication using the category of culture. This means that establishing dialogical relations lived in the immanent here and now requires an understanding of the complexity of factors that constitute the context of interaction,

Paying close attention to actual interactions not only reminds us of the importance of natural language and the complexity of human interactions; it also demonstrates that interactants sometimes simply do not want to understand each other and that misunderstandings arise not only because of linguistic or cultural differences, but also because people fight and argue. Put differently, in interactions there are often simply different interests at stake and interactants may not actually want to understand each other. Intercultural communication research often creates the impression that if we just knew how to overcome our linguistic and cultural differences, we would get on just fine with each other and the world would be transformed into a paradise on earth. (Piller 2011, p. 155)

In this sense, an intercultural speaker adopting a dialogic approach is able not only to analyse the constraints that influence interaction and the role of language in the communicative exchange, but is also able to recognise and understand the ways in which culture is being enacted and recreated. From this perspective, concerns relating to the use of the category of culture to explain when something ‘goes wrong’ in communication are addressed by the straightforward relation with the other described by Levinas, which relates to his notion of responsibility intended as a response to the other that occurs through engagement in dialogue. This notion of responsibility is described by Bakhtin (1986) as the addressivity of language, the fact that all interactants are active participants in communication.

THE MULTIPERSPECTIVAL

Guilherme defines competence as the acquisition of a critical awareness of context. This awareness is achieved through the acquisition of specific skills, attitudes and knowledge,

It entails becoming aware of the web of intra- and intercultural meanings that are always struggling and evolving. The more conscious we are of the constraints, implications, and possibilities that each situation carries, the more critical we become. (Guilherme 2002, p. 155)
With regard to this model of critical cultural awareness, the final aim of the development of critical intercultural competence is the achievement of symmetry between self and other. This means that, the analysis of cultural differences facilitates the understanding of how these differences influence communication and fosters the ability to assess ‘the constraints, implications and possibilities’ (ibid.) guiding communicative exchanges. According to this model of critical cultural awareness, this type of intercultural understanding establishes a form of reciprocity between the self and the other. This ideal of critical awareness responds to a conception of the self modelled on Kantian autonomous rational subjectivity. In contrast to this conception of the relation between self and other, the notion of asymmetry underlying the idea of an heteronomous self takes into account the fact that in the inter- of communication, in the messiness of languaging (Phipps and Gonzalez 2004; Phipps 2007), self and other can never achieve transparent communication, perfect correspondence and symmetry. However, the acceptance of the impossibility to reach this ideal of ‘a paradise on earth’ (Piller 2011, p. 155), meaning the idea of a promise of understanding in which all conflicting claims are pacified in the name of a higher universal truth, brings about another dimension of communication between self and other. Accounts of critical awareness (see Tomic and Lengel 1997; Tomic 2001; Guilherme 2002) describe the process in which the encounter with the strangeness of another cultural perspective allows the self to reflect critically on his/her own cultural standpoint and to discover the other within oneself. From this perspective, through critical reflection the self understands the behaviour of the other as the expression of cultural difference. Consequently, the self is able to negotiate these differences, and can finally assess critically his/her own cultural tradition in the light of this encounter with the other. Although this is a desirable outcome of interaction in intercultural encounters, another aspect of communication between self and other can be interpreted within a dialogical perspective. Returning to the aforementioned notion of immigration of the self (Cavell 1996), the fact that the self is defined through the act of negotiating and translating meanings, it can be argued that through open-ended dialogue intended as saying, self and other do not simply accept their reciprocal belonging to different cultural traditions. Instead of directing interaction toward an ideal of tolerance, open ended dialogue enables the discovery that both self and other are incomplete beings. This means that the other is not simply a mirror reflecting the otherness present within the self, instead both self and other find a common existential state of
incompleteness expressed in the inadequacy of culture to explain the behaviour of the other interlocutor.

**A Comparison of Competence Models**

The positions of self and other in interaction and the respective underlying assumptions of each framework are illustrated in Table 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4. Dialogic interaction is illustrated in Fig. 4.1.

Table 4.2 illustrates intercultural competence understood as the ability to deal effectively with the other. Knowledge about the culture of the other, and the skills to communicate effectively are acquired before the interaction.

**Underlying assumptions:** effectiveness, communicative transparency, tolerance, awareness of culture, rationality, autonomy, cultural sensitivity.

Table 4.3 illustrates intercultural competence as the ability to develop critical awareness of culture in order to communicate effectively. As a result of intercultural interaction, the self is transformed into an intercultural being who can communicate effectively with the other and is able to assess cultures critically, showing high degrees of tolerance of the other.

**Underlying assumptions:** effectiveness, critical awareness of culture, autonomy, rationality, tolerance, cultural sensitivity, responsibility.

Table 4.4 illustrates competence understood as the existential readiness to dwell in another language and culture. This ability is acquired in interaction. The self is transformed after experiencing the other.

**Underlying assumptions:** existential, experiential, open-ended dialogue, messiness of intercultural encounters.

**Table 4.2** The pyramid model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self</th>
<th>Knowledge and skills</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Table 4.3** ICOPROMO. A transformational model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self</th>
<th>Knowledge and skills</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Transformation/intercultural personhood</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Table 4.4** Dwelling

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Self and other</th>
<th>Experience</th>
<th>Other in the self</th>
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</table>
In Fig. 4.1, dialogism unfolds in interaction. Interaction results in the recognition of a reciprocal and common existential state of incompleteness. Intercultural encounters represent the opportunity to discover the otherness in the familiar, and to accept the fact that both self and other remain unknowable.

**Underlying assumptions:** culture as a discursive resource of all interlocutors, reciprocal incompleteness of both self and other, heteronomy, sensibility, ethical responsibility, dialogism.

Dialogic interaction is thus dependent on attitudes that are developed in the praxis of engagement with the other. First of all, a critical attitude towards culture is enacted through the ability to question the attribution of cultural traits to understand the communicative behaviour of interlocutors. Instead, an appreciation of context will lead to a more nuanced form of interaction that is guided by the willingness to engage in dialogue. Finally, developing existential attitudes in interaction brings about the acceptance of uncertainty in dialogue and the knowledge that both self and other are incomplete beings. These attitudes, and their underlying assumptions, challenge the implicit autonomy that characterises the ways in which intercultural competence is conceptualised in the other models discussed. In this sense, dialogic interaction requires the development of intercultural sensibility. Moreover, it addresses the methodological nationalism implicit in intercultural language education (Holliday 2011; Cole and Meadows 2013), through its focus on the use of language in context, rather than on cultural attributes attached to idealised speakers of a language. As argued in relation to the *saying* and the *said*, in this understanding of competence
self and other are not beings enclosed within their own cultural horizon awaiting reciprocal recognition. On the contrary, the passage from the synchronicity of the *said* to the diachrony of the *saying* allows the emergence of the interdependence of self and other, which is manifested through engagement in dialogue between interlocutors who remain singular, unique and thus, ‘other’. The epistemology underpinning these attitudes is based on the notions explored in the Chap. 3 in relation to Levinasian ethics and it is illustrated in Table 4.5

- **Asymmetry**: the asymmetrical relation between self and other (Levinas 1985, 1998) represents a lived experience of communication between embodied subjects.
- **Heteronomy**: adopting the ethical framework of Levinas, heteronomy stands for the phenomenal world where the self interacts with other selves to become an ethical being. The experience of ethics is thus developed in interaction, intersubjectively, and not only from universal maxims.
- **Sensibility**: being affected by others as an embodied ethical self.
- **Saying**: this modality of discourse is the expression of the relationship established in the immanent *here and now*.
- **Promise as deferred understanding**: this aspect relates to the idea of dialogue as open-ended engagement with others, and acceptance of uncertainty. This idea of deferred understanding addresses concerns relating to a superficial embrace of cultural difference as tolerance of the practices of the cultural other, particularly the critique of depoliticised versions of multiculturalism expressed in the image of a domesticated good other (Badiou 2001; Žižek 2006).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4.5  Epistemological framework</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attitude: criticality of constructs of culture</td>
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<tr>
<td>Outcome: ability to question the attribution of cultural traits to the other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude: ability to assess the context of interaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcome: engagement in dialogue resulting from a critical stance towards the notion of tolerance of the cultural other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude: readiness to engage in dialogue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcome: acceptance of uncertainty. Knowledge that both self and other are incomplete beings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Assessing Intercultural Competence, an Impossible Task?

The categories of reliability, validity and consistency applied to the assessment of intercultural competence are in fact used to determine the achievement of an end point, meaning the transformation of the self from being a monocultural entity to an intercultural one. This content-based approach presents an idealised version of intercultural competence that is abstracted from the complex dynamic that occurs in intercultural encounters and that in the present chapter have been interpreted in terms of the Marxist category of fetishism. Therefore, considering the processual character of intercultural interaction, assessment of intercultural competence has to account for the situated, experiential, messy, contradictory, immanent and subjective character of intercultural learning. Due to the state of flux of the concepts of self and other it is a very difficult task to pinpoint a definition of competence and consequently to set objectives for the assessment of competence. In this sense, Witte writes that,

Teaching and acquiring intercultural competence cannot be product-orientated, as there exists no definable end-product. (2011, p. 103)

Byram (1997) divides the components of intercultural competence into knowledge (savoirs), skills of interpreting and relating (savoir comprendre), skills of discovery and interaction (savoir apprendre/faire) and values in the form of critical cultural awareness (savoir s’engager). However, the foundation of intercultural competence is in the attitudes (savoir être) of openness, readiness to relativise and the ability to decentre. In this context, Byram addresses the issue of reliability that is attached to the notion of assessment in terms of accountability of educators, teaching institutions and providers of intercultural training, highlighting the emergence of a ‘transmission’ view of teaching and an approach that ‘atomises knowledge’ (Byram 1997, p. 104) in a series of identifiable abilities that can be transmitted to the learner. This simplification of competences, argues Byram, trivializes learning:

It is the simplification of competences to what can be ‘objectively’ tested which has a detrimental effect: the learning of trivial facts, the reduction of subtle understanding to generalisations and stereotypes, the lack of attention to interaction and engagement because these are not tested. (1997, p. 111)
Byram emphasizes complexity and thick description in order to capture the more elusive aspects of competence, particularly through the use of portfolios developed over a period of time. The production of portfolios containing autobiographical material represents a form of self-assessment that helps educators and intercultural trainers in determining the achievement of aspects of competence. However, personal accounts and experiences are always complex and multidimensional, and thus difficult to assess following criteria of reliability, validity and consistency. To this, it is possible to add the issue of veridicality of autobiographical material, considering the power relation between teachers and students, and between intercultural providers and individuals attending courses as required by their employers. Furthermore, Dervin (2010) adds the desire to please the teacher offering ready-made answers. Sercu highlights the situation when learners fail to achieve assessment outcomes such as the development of desired personality traits, for example interest in other cultures, or building positive images of self and other. To illustrate this point, Sercu brings as an example the Savoirs developed by Byram, asking whether the failure to develop determined competences and skills that are deemed to represent the effective intercultural person signals the inability to become intercultural or simply the impossibility to decide the outcomes of intercultural learning prior to the intercultural experience,

If learners cannot solve a particular intercultural problem, is it because they are not skillful with respect to the savoir-apprendre or savoir-comprendre dimensions of intercultural competence, or are inadequate savoirs the reason for their failure to complete an assessment task adequately? (Sercu 2004, p. 78)

Sercu here addresses a crucial aspect of intercultural assessment, asking if categories, level descriptors and Savoirs can encompass the complexity of engagement in communication and human understanding. From this perspective, Le Goff describes the practice of assessment in terms of a ‘gentle barbarism’ that characterizes modernity, whereby the creation of mechanisms to evaluate skills and performance is presented as guided by criteria of scientificity, in the name of functional imperatives presented as “neutral, objective tools used by experts” (2002, p. 42). This gentle barbarism reduces people to a collection of skills and to machinery seen as a more or less well-adapted to ‘natural’ developments in which they themselves are simply elements among many. (Le Goff 2002, p. 44)
This critique of modernization as a form of soft barbarism echoes the critique of instrumental reason in Adorno and Horkheimer (2010), posing pressing questions on the wider implications for education of the demands for effective and reliable assessment tools to evaluate performance, particularly when the task of assessment risks to simplify the complex dynamics of intercultural learning. In line with a model of intercultural competence modelled on dialogism, the definition of assessment has to reflect the shift from a notion of the autonomous self to a conception of the heteronomous self. In other words, practitioners attempting to define the assessment of dialogic competence will have to accept that becoming intercultural is a process of discovery, an existential readiness to take risks and engage with the unknown, although not in terms of a state of completeness that is achieved at the end of intercultural learning.

CONCLUSION

Taking the notion of competence as paradigmatic of the epistemological underpinnings of intercultural communication, this chapter contrasts two modalities of engagement between self and other, the first in terms of an ideal of final reconciliation and universal tolerance, the other as deferred understanding and open ended dialogue. In the first instance, an etiolated notion of otherness emerges according to which the other is enclosed within the parameters of cultural categorisation. In contrast to that, dialogism emphasises the partial and immanent character of communication in intercultural contexts. Taking this stance, however, places the intercultural researcher in the position of renouncing tidy classifications of skills, aims and objectives that can be measured reliably and consistently, in favour of a wider exploration of the epistemology that underpins the notion of assessment in education. This means that the intercultural researcher pursuing a model of dialogic interculturalism has to delve into the messiness of the intercultural and explore different theoretical approaches that offer new epistemological and methodological frameworks.

NOTES

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CHAPTER 5

Conclusion

Abstract This chapter summarises the themes presented in the book by outlining one of the principal challenges in the formulation of new methodological approaches to research in intercultural communication: accounting for alterity in terms of letting the otherness of the other emerge in interaction, while considering power differentials between self and other. The chapter considers future challenges for intercultural communication through a shift in research that emphasises contingency and precarity, or sojourning, over neat classifications and narratives of emancipation and final reconciliation.

Keywords Alterity • Tolerance • Intercultural subjectivity • Intercultural education

Final Thoughts
The preceding chapters are characterised by a problematizing approach, aiming to highlight the inherent contradictions of intercultural communication research and to unravel some of its conceptual knots, particularly those related to the relation between self and other based on tolerance. Due to the historicity of the object of critique (Adorno 1973), problematizing practice entails that understanding can never be totalised, rather the process of critique unearths further questions and raises new challenges. Furthermore, this approach recognises the inescapable metaphysics of
presence (Derrida 1997) implied in the inevitable ‘sin’ of essentialism committed when employing cultural categories to engage with others in daily interactions. In this regard, this book suggests that the exercise of ethical vigilance recognises this metaphysical complicity by interrogating the practice of cultural categorisation of the other through the idea of tolerance. In Chap. 3 tolerance is discussed adopting the notion of conditional hospitality, or hostipitality, to use Derrida’s (2006) terminology, which indicates a modality of welcoming of the other that is dependent on the goodwill of the host. In this respect, tolerance is a discourse stemming from the autonomous individual of Kantian ethics, which this book contrasts with the values of reciprocity and inter-dependence underpinning dialogic intercultural interaction. This contrast between two conceptions of ethical engagement between self and other has represented the primary focus in discussing the epistemological assumptions of intercultural communication in this book. Beginning with the epistemological presuppositions of intercultural competence in the ideal of transparent communication across cultural barriers, and of the transformative power of intercultural consciousness in engendering tolerance and responsibility toward the cultural other, the theoretical presuppositions of intercultural communication as a field of study have been critically evaluated and problematized. As an alternative repositioning of alterity (i.e. the distinction between self and not-self), intercultural communication is here envisaged in terms of embodiment and immanence of the other, and of deferred understanding. Dialogism is defined according to the modality of the *saying*, which is contrasted to attempts to totalise meaning from the perspective of competence, which this book frames adopting the modality of discourse of the *said* (Levinas 1998). This distinction between the *saying* and the *said* established in Chap. 3 poses the following challenge for future directions in intercultural communication: can a theory of intercultural communication be devised which takes account of difference and otherness as constitutive of communication, while also blurring the distinction between inter-and intra-cultural communication? This last chapter will attempt to delineate an answer by pulling together the different strands in the book.

This book aims to describe the features of dialogic interaction in contrast to current models of intercultural competence. The critique of two competence models that are paradigmatic of the idea of competence critiqued in this book, the Pyramid model and the ICOPROMO project in Chap. 4, has highlighted the power dimension at work in communication and the idea of difference as a negative term, as something that otherises
and constrains the individual (Warren 2008), in contrast to a dialogic perspective that reconceptualises difference as a constitutive trait of the self in terms of incompleteness. This incompleteness, is seen emerging in the contrast between the state of immigrancy of the self (Cavell 1996) and the idea of dwelling (Heidegger 1971), and becoming more visible in the existential experience of intercultural interaction. This critical engagement with the field of intercultural communication in the preceding chapters hopes to contribute to a methodological shift toward a more prominent role of the voice of the other in research that emphasises a conceptualisation of the self in terms of embodied subjectivity rather than in terms of autonomy and individuality. One aspect that proves especially challenging is attempting to reconcile the idea of the otherness of the other while maintaining the character of reciprocity in interaction between self and other, an issue which this book frames in the context of dialogism. Levinas’s (1998) distinction between the saying and the said is crucial in this book’s attempt to theorise this reconciliation. Rather than focusing on the idea that is most associated with Levinasian ethics, namely the face of the other, this book instead emphasises the intersubjective connotations that emerge in the dynamic relation between the two modes of discourse of the saying and the said. In that dynamic relation can be identified a key for a conceptual description of interculturality in terms of reciprocal engagement that avoids essentialist generalizations while preserving alterity, i.e. the separation of self and other, or asymmetry. The ethical tension experienced by the author when writing this book can be described as the endeavour to reconcile the idea of the radical otherness of the other as it is expressed by Levinas, with the intersubjective dimension of communication that underpins dialogism. As Levinas writes,

The relationship with the other is not an idyllic and harmonious relationship of communion, or a sympathy through which we put ourselves in the other’s place, we recognise the other as resembling us, but exterior to us. (Levinas 1987, p. 75)

In that respect, this reconciliation challenges the idea of autonomy of the self in favour of a reappraisal of the role of the other in intercultural engagement. This relation of alterity proposed in this book reflects Levinas’s preoccupation with temporality, an aspect that is illustrated in reference to the saying and the said. Temporality in this context is divided into the two modalities of synchronicity, i.e. the flow of time, and
diachrony, i.e. the event. As belonging to a diachronic dimension of temporality, the other represents the future, the unpredictable nature of the event, and the unfolding of communication in interaction. Here, the notion of deferred understanding substitutes the idea of completeness and final harmony that characterises the formulation of intercultural competence. An important consequence of adopting dialogism as a framework to understand intercultural interaction is that the possibility of conflict and misunderstanding are not glossed over, because they are recognised as constitutive of communication. This aspect of the relation with the other was recognised by Levinas, who wrote: “The Other is the sole being I can wish to kill” (Levinas 1969, p. 198).

Interaction is not idealised in a model of communicative transparency, however the emphasis on the ethical aspect of dialogism is underpinned by acceptance of uncertainty, and therefore the possibility of conflict and misunderstanding, and the fact that the other remains exterior to us. Giving account of this exteriority of the other, which for Levinas means the radical otherness of the other, represents one of the ethical and methodological challenges facing the theory of intercultural communication. The critical frameworks described in Chap. 2, namely perspectivism, liquid interculturality, the critical cosmopolitan potential and critical intercultural citizenship, focus on the hybrid and changing nature of the self, while reasserting the power of critical thinking to demystify false and distorted representations of the other. This book adds another perspective to critical intercultural thinking, according to which the self initiates an intercultural journey only after encountering the other, in line with the Levinasian description of the ethical as stemming from outside the self in Chap. 3. Given the loss of autonomy of the self that this conception of the ethical entails, intercultural experiences cannot be predicted in advance through the imposition of outcomes and the definition of competences. Rather, the intercultural is best described in terms of an existential disposition characterised by embodiment and incompleteness. In this sense, the idea that “the Other is the sole being I can wish to kill” (Levinas 1969, p. 198), describes the conundrum that characterises the theoretical framework that informs this book: if the self does not renounce the solipsistic practice of categorisation of the other, the experience of intercultural encounters remains devoid of ethical significance. However, encounter does not equate to harmony and reconciliation, because the other remains exterior to the self, meaning that the ethical here is intended as unfolding in interaction. In Levinas’s words, refusal to recognise this exteriority and
independence of the other in respect to the self represents the ultimate form of annihilation: “To kill is not to dominate but to annihilate; it is to renounce comprehension absolutely” (ibid.). Thus, essentialist practices of othering preclude any possibility of engagement and comprehension by creating a framework that is superimposed on the other.

**Future Directions and Methodological Implications**

In the exploration of the ethical conditions of intercultural engagement, this book raises the question of methodological approaches that include attentiveness to the other in shaping a post-methodology based on the decentring of the researcher. In this sense, it is necessary to maintain an interdisciplinary effort that enables different perspectives to emerge in research and this final chapter suggests three future directions for the development of a post-methodological framework in intercultural communication. One of the principal challenges facing researchers is to confront established methodological approaches based on paradigms developed in the social sciences. According to Phipps (2013), this fact creates a rift between theoretical explorations of ethical issues and the necessities of academic methodological requirements. Crucially, Phipps argues that exploratory, post-colonial and decentring methods have not been sufficiently incorporated in social scientific methodologies, particularly in the fields of applied linguistics and intercultural education. According to Phipps, theorising a ‘post-methodology’ that encompasses the decentring of the researcher represents a crucial issue in intercultural studies, meaning that both researcher and researched are able to continuously negotiate the meanings and dynamics and the potential for aesthetic resonance of their speech such that the speech and speakerhoods may debate, dialogue, translate, interpret and chorus their understandings and hopes for their particular intercultural world. (Phipps 2013, p. 18)

Thus, it has to be established how this open ended dialogue between researcher and researched can be developed within a framework that is acceptable in academic contexts, to assure that research methods in language and intercultural communication can rise to the considerable challenge of ‘ceasing their zealous defining and fixing of others in order to allow spaces for the margins to become visible’. (Phipps 2013, p. 12)
The decentring stance of the researcher translates in the acceptance of uncertainty, which entails entering in responsible engagement with others in dialogue. Following from this initial presupposition, the first direction for the development of a post-methodological framework is to adopt Todd’s (2003) invitation to approach research as the practice of listening. According to Corradi (1990), our use of language is characterised not only by expression, but also by our ability to listen. The type of listening that envisioned in intercultural research is that of enabling the other to speak through decentring of the self, meaning that “the listener provides opportunities for further speech, for further elaboration to occur, where what matters is not the listener per se, but the speaker being able to speak” (Todd 2003, p. 406). In other words, the practice of listening can be translated as the endeavour to let the saying emerge in communication, as discussed in Chap. 3 in relation to the contribution of Levinas in intercultural communication. Although Levinas’s ethical framework is underpinned by the corporeity of interaction and the bodily presence of self and other, engagement with the other can be established at a distance via images, events and narratives that elicit an ethical call and invite a response. Indeed, Butler’s call (2012) relating to the importance of extending the preoccupation with the closeness of the individual other to account for the mediated character of contemporaneity, means that the ethical call may arise from an ‘elsewhere’ rather than the ‘here and now’. This is demonstrated in the pervasiveness of media in contemporary life which poses the challenge of responding to the other “at a distance” (p. 134). In this context, the preoccupation with embodied subjectivity that characterises Levinasian ethics can be applied to ethical engagement with the other from a distance, through the critique of the essentialism that pervades representations of the other in the media and in political discourse.

The second direction, in line with the more critical perspectives in intercultural communication, suggests a turn in research increasingly concerned with the sense of precarity and insecurity that permeates the current political climate, characterised by political discourses that pursue a neo-liberal agenda in which uniformity and sameness become totalising narratives that marginalise the other as undesirable. In this respect, the analysis of the ways in which the other is framed, silenced and marginalised represents a challenge for intercultural communication, because firstly it problematizes the role of researchers engaged in intercultural research, and secondly it reveals the dangers of unreflective essentialism in perpetrating othering.
The third direction, and connected to the above two points, relates to attention to alterity in terms of letting the otherness of the other emerge in interaction, while considering power differentials between self and other. This remains one the principal challenges in the definition of the pedagogical principles of interculturality. As discussed in Chap. 4, dialogism offers an alternative to the emphasis placed on culture in foreign language education. Moreover, dialogism addresses the issue of a powerful legislating self related to the idea of emancipation in critical intercultural awareness in delineated in Chap. 2. As argued in that chapter, emancipation rests on the centrality of the self in relation to the world which, in accordance to a Levinasian ethical framework, constitutes a form of totalisation. In this regard, the question of translating intersubjectivity into an educational project remains an endeavour that warrants further exploration. This project could assume as starting points singularity and asymmetry between self and other in order to redefine interculturality as a process of sojourning and translation of the self. The temporal tension between the present state of solipsism of the self and the future glimpsed through the encounter with otherness underpins the book, and to conclude in Levinas’s words:

The other is the future. The very relationship with the other is the relationship with the future. (Levinas 1987, p. 77)

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