CHALLENGING INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE: CULTURE AS AN EMERGENT PHENOMENON

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Abstract: Despite ongoing critical debates, performance-oriented practice of teaching intercultural communicative competence, including influential models of Michael Byram and especially Geert Hofstede, often relies on static and essentialised cultural models and disregarding the idea of culture as an emergent phenomenon. Focusing on Hofstede's 6D model, the article discusses the theory and practice of teaching intercultural communicative competence as part of English for Specific Purposes within the context of business and management studies in light of philosophical perspectives drawn from the ethics of dialogic personalism (Levinas, Ricœur) and Wolfgang Iser's literary anthropology. The aim of the discussion is to provide teachers and practitioners with a relevant theoretical framework as well as pedagogic perspectives necessary for using potentially problematic cultural models in a way which is both efficient and theoretically viable.

Keywords: Intercultural communicative competence, culture as emergent phenomenon, Emmanuel Levinas, Wolfgang Iser, Geert Hofstede

Teaching English for Specific Purposes (ESP) at university level, especially within the field of business, economics and management studies, requires a careful consideration of the latest trends in language teaching in learning, including telecollaboration, transversal skills, language coaching methods, or the development of intercultural communicative competence.

Consequently, university language teachers, and teachers of business English (BE) in particular, face the demand to meaningfully accommodate a growing number of innovations in the development of language teaching and learning. These include intercultural communicative competence which has over the past two decades become a fact of life for both language teachers and other educators

and professionals in international business and management – especially those focusing on business English and English for specific purposes.

Intercultural communicative competence (ICC), traditionally defined as "the ability to interact with people from another country and culture in a foreign language,"[1] has over the past decade established itself as an indispensable part of language and soft-skills curricula of university business schools and professional development training and is generally accepted as "a vital competence in our contemporary world, especially (but not exclusively) for specialists involved in mediating between people."[2]

The popularity of ICC gradually attracted considerable critical attention which focused on developing efficient methodologies for teaching and training ICC across a variety of professional contexts while at the same time, and perhaps more saliently, questioning some of the most fundamental assumptions underpinning ICC's prominent theoretical frameworks, including influential cultural performance models of Michael Byram and Geert Hofstede.[3]

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[1] Michael Byram, *Teaching and Assessing Intercultural Communication Competence* (Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 1997) 71.

[2] Fred Dervin, "Assessing Intercultural Competence in Language Learning and Teaching: A Critical Review of Current Efforts in Higher Education," *New Approaches to Assessment in Higher Education*, ed. Fred Dervin and Eija Suomela-Salmi (Bern: Peter Lang, 2010) 157-74.

[3] See, e.g., Giuliana Ferri, "Ethical Communication and Intercultural Responsibility: A Philosophical Perspective," *Language and Intercultural Communication* 14, no. 1 (2014): 7-23, https://doi.org/10.1080/14708477.2013.866121; Hild E. Hoff, "A Critical Discussion of Byram's Model of Intercultural Communicative Competence in the Light of Bildung Theories," *Intercultural Education* 25, no. 6 (2014): 508-17, https://doi.org/10.1080/14675986.2014.992112; Catherine Matsuo: "A Critique of Michael Byram's Intercultural Communicative Competence Model from the Perspective of Model Type and Conceptualization of Culture," *Fukuoka University Review of Literature & Humanities* 44 (2012): 347-80; Catherine Matsuo, "A Dialogic Critique of Michael Byram's Intercultural Communicative Competence Model: Proposal for a Dialogic Pedagogy," *Comprehensive Study on Language Education Methods and Cross-linguistic Proficiency Evaluation Methods for Asian Languages: Final Report 2014*, ed. Nobuo Tomimori (Tokyo: Tokyo University of Foreign Studies Grants-in-Aid for Scientific Research (B), Japan Society for the Promotion of Science, 2015): 3-22; Brendan McSweeney, "A Triumph of Faith – A Failure of Analysis: Hofstede's Model of National Cultural Differences and Their Consequences," *Human Relations* 55, no. 1 (2002): 89-118, https://doi.org/10.1177/0018726702551004; Brendan McSweeney, "Dynamic Diversity: Variety and Variation within Countries," *Organization Studies* 30, no. 9 (2009): 933–57, https://doi.org/10.1177/0170840609338983; Abhik Roy and William J. Starosta, "Hans-Georg Gadamer, Language, and Intercultural Communication," *Language and Intercultural Communication* 1, no. 1 (2001): 6-20, https://doi.org/10.1080/14708470108668060.

The characteristic and often criticised feature of both Byram's and Hofstede's cultural models is their tendency to describe culture using a set of predefined categories or cultural dimensions. These dimensions are in turn applied to describe the cultural other as a representative member of a given culture, and thereby to explain their behaviour-patterns, and predict their stances and communication styles. A typical product of this way of thinking is Geert Hofstede's 6D model of culture. Hofstede consistently theorises culture as a nation-culture or "the totality of cultures, within a nation,"[4] defining it as the "collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others."[5] His 6D model of culture consequently allows its users to localise "the relative positions of 76 countries on the six dimensions […] expressed in a score on a 0-100 point scale;"[6] these six dimensions include: the Power Distance Index, Individualism versus Collectivism, Masculinity Versus Femininity, Uncertainty Avoidance Index, Long Term Orientation versus Short Term Normative Orientation, and Indulgence versus Restraint. To understand the cultural programming of a cultural other therefore equals to locating the position of their nation's culture within the 6D model and using this knowledge to predict their most likely behavioural patterns. Hofstede's web accordingly provides a handy online application which allows individuals to visualise their culture and manage intercultural encounters.[7]

Despite ongoing critical debates,[8] intercultural models such as Hofstede's became highly popular, especially in performance-oriented fields such as economics, international marketing, and management, i.e., in contexts, as their critics pointed out, with a strong preference for "elite situations" in which the "recognition of the other is essentialised."[9] The popularity of Hofstede's models in these areas of knowledge in turn makes them unavoidable within the specialised context of business schools and their Business English courses where ICC models often serve as an all-too-handy tool for managing and mediating potentially challenging encounters between intercultural speakers. Hofstede's

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[4]   Geert Hofstede, *Culture's Consequences: Comparing Values, Behaviors, Institutions and Organizations across Nations* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2001) 2.

[5]   Hofstede, *Culture's Consequences* 3.

[6]   "National Culture," Hofstede Insights, https://hi.hofstede-insights.com/national-culture.

[7]   "Compare Countries," Hofstede Insights, https://www.hofstede-insights.com/fi/product/compare-countries/.

[8]   See, e.g., McSweeney, "A Triumph of Faith" 89-118; McSweeney, "Dynamic Diversity" 933-57; or Geert Hofstede, "Dimensions Do Not Exist: A Reply to Brendan McSweeney," *Human Relations* 55, no. 11 (2002): 1355–61, https://doi.org/10.1177/00187267025511004.

[9]   Ferri, "Ethical Communication and Intercultural Responsibility" 9.

facile compartmentalisation of culture into easily graspable categories and uncomplicated nation-cultures within the field of business and management studies can in this sense be linked to the latter's "practical orientation" as a scientific discipline which attaches "great importance to detailed applications and techniques," yet often neglects "epistemological and methodological foundations."[10]

If, as it has been pointed out, management qua scientific discipline, in the most general sense of the word, has its "feet firmly set in the ground" while preferring not to have its "theoretical head in the clouds,"[11] business school language teachers and ICC trainers find themselves challenged to pedagogically approach similar performance-oriented models of ICC and reconcile them with their more theoretically minded critics, hopefully arriving at an interdisciplinary solution which is both functional, critically justifiable, and appealing to practically-minded students of economics, management, and business studies. This response should respect the cultural dimensions as important "tools of trade" and at the same time accept that, as Wolfgang Iser pointed out, "dealing cognitively with human beings – who have made themselves into what they are both socially and culturally – appears to require a transgression of epistemological boundaries."[12]

Training ICC: Theoretical Problems, Practical Implications

The pragmatic, practice-oriented approach based on the fetishization of "distinct, enduring and uni-causal national cultures"[13] in static cultural models and a number of mainstream BE textbooks has profound pedagogic implications, especially since most activities and tasks aiming at developing ICC at least partially rely on distributing and/or classifying individual nation cultures according to the given dimensions. For instance, a typical ICC-oriented task in *In Company 3.0*, a BE textbook commonly used in university language courses, asks students to read a short article from Hofstede's *Culture's Consequences* about Power Distance and, in a follow up assignment, distribute six countries along a "Power-Distance Scale" from "Small" to "Large" Power Distance. Although the article is, besides a simple question "What does the author say about the assertiveness and culture?" accompanied by a tentative, closed question "Do you agree?",[14] the

[10]   Lukasz Sulkowski, *Epistemology of Management* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2013) 7.

[11]   Sulkowski, *Epistemology of Management* 7.

[12]   Wolfgang Iser, "What Is Literary Anthropology? The Difference between Explanatory and Exploratory Fictions," *Revenge of the Aesthetic: The Place of Literature in Theory Today*, ed. Michael P. Clark (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000) 163.

[13]   McSweeney, "A Triumph of Faith" 1364.

[14]   Mark Powell, *In Company 3.0: Intermediate Student's Book* (London: Macmillan, 2002) 122.

overall drive towards a more or less uncritical acceptance of the given cultural dimension remains apparent. Although it would be easy to argue that it is perfectly acceptable for a language textbook, i.e., a material not directly dedicated to ICC training, to offer a bite-size approach to ICC, it is important to consider potential negative implications of this approach to developing ICC and how to mitigate them.

Generally speaking, if treated uncritically, this approach to ICC suggests that first, the cultural dimensions *exist* (in a strong sense) as *natural* categories and that they, in their status, resemble natural laws or generally applicable, value-neutral rules; second, such approach to ICC portrays arbitrary cultural dimensions as sole or major explanations, a single hypothesis, or "originary scene"[15] magically explaining culture, rather than *an* input for an explorative play of critical interpretation of an intercultural encounter; and finally, this approach downgrades an intercultural encounter from a recursive process of feedback looping to a linear one-step exercise in cultural taxonomy, eliminating both individual responsibility of intercultural speakers and marginalizing its ethical components.

The Ontology of Cultural Dimensions

It is hardly surprising that Hofstede's critics have been eager to point out that his cultural model promotes identities based on nationality, exclusivity and power, and all-too-easily replaces the plurality of dialogic encounters between intercultural speakers with a set of stereotypes fuelled by pre-defined and pre-existing cultural norms. Instead of capturing or at least attempting to capture the "reciprocal relationship between humans and the culture which they create and by which they are created,"[16] these static norms are underpinned by universally applicable and measurable cultural dimensions and indexes which rely on essentialist myths of homogeneous, territorially unique nation-cultures, disregarding the hybrid and shifting nature of the self, modern society, and socially constructed, dialogic nature of communication, meaning and language in general.[17]

Consistently with this line of criticism, the "reification" and "reduction of culture"[18] perpetuated by Hofstede's model tends to disregard current conceptualisations of culture as a "continuously emerging phenomenon" which

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[15]   Wolfgang Iser, "What Is Literary Anthropology?" 163.
[16]   Iser, "What Is Literary Anthropology?" 159.
[17]   For relevant criticism see footnote 2.
[18]   Iser, "What Is Literary Anthropology?" 159.

"does not arise out of anything given, but rather out of a transformation of what is given"[19] and instead offers a "thin description," promoting a simple "superimposition of concepts on what one is given to observe."[20] Such umbrella terms treat culture as a "collective programming of the mind"[21] and embody the idea of what Iser – quoting Clifford Geertz – refers to as "culture [located] in the minds and hearts of men,"[22] degrading the play of interpretation into "an act which determines the intended meaning of the subject matter."[23]

This line of criticism, in itself highly relevant, goes hand in hand with the need to question and problematize what might be loosely described as the ontological status of the cultural dimensions as supposed natural laws, as well as of their "mythological status" which stems from their ambition to locate a "discernible origin of culture,"[24] suggesting that a "dimension or dimensions of a particular national culture are not […] mere influences, part of the causal process, but the exclusive cause with an invariant outcome."[25] Such considerations are closely connected to Hofstede's own account of how he conceptualised the dimensions which constitute his cultural model.

Hofstede famously created his cultural dimensions based on a "large survey database about values and related sentiments of people in over 50 countries around the world"[26] working for IBM in the 1970s. Since then, he and his followers have been expanding on his initial research which at the moment encompasses the six dimensions mentioned above. Consistently with this, in *Culture's Consequences* Hofstede reminds his readers that "dimensions do not 'exist'" and that, just like "'culture' itself, they are constructs […] that have been introduced because they subsume complex sets of mental programs into easily remembered packages."[27] Yet in the same text, Hofstede also offers an anecdotal commentary on his inductive method applied in conceptualising the dimensions. Announcing his decision to "step back from the data" Hofstede notes that the conceptualisation of a cultural dimension is

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19   Iser, "What Is Literary Anthropology?" 162-3.
20   Iser, "What Is Literary Anthropology?" 161.
21   Hofstede, *Culture's Consequences* 2.
22   Iser, "What Is Literary Anthropology?" 159.
23   Wolfgang Iser, *The Range of Interpretation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000) 151.
24   Iser, "What Is Literary Anthropology?" 162.
25   McSweeney, "A Triumph of Faith" 1366.
26   Geert Hofstede, "Dimensionalizing Cultures: The Hofstede Model in Context," *Online Readings in Psychology and Culture* 2, no. 1 (2011): 2-26, https://doi.org/10.9707/2307-0919.1014.
27   Hofstede, *Culture's Consequences* 71.

an exercise in induction, which means that I complete the picture with elements based on intuition rather than empirical evidence, much as an archaeologist completes ancient pottery from which shards are missing.[28]

As if in response to Hofstede's portrayal of his inductive method, when opening his discussion of his own literary anthropology, Wolfgang Iser mentions Leroi-Gourhan's reference to "the concept of tools […] being a 'secretion' of the anthropoid's body and brain." Iser also comments on what he calls "the predicament of anthropology"[29] – a seemingly impossible task of providing an outline of culture qua a product of an unfinished animal "as a product and as a record of human manifestations."[30] All this, Iser notes, poses

a virtually insoluble problem. On the one hand the ethnographical approach – based on field work – has to draw controlled inferences, either from the fossils found or the observations made, in order to establish a fact […]. On the other hand, such generalizations are indispensable to the filling of gaps even if there is no evidence for their validity. […] Although there is no tangible evidence for these generalizations, which are necessary to make the fossils speak, there is also no reason to dispute such conclusions, since they appear to be perfectly acceptable.[31]

From the pedagogic perspective on ICC models, Iser's analysis offers two major insights. Firstly, ICC teachers and trainers should ensure that static cultural models do not *overstep* their instrumental role as (mere) "explanatory concepts" and are not mistaken for "the reality for which many successful explanations are so frequently taken."[32] This realisation needs to be accompanied by a second step in which teachers raise students' awareness of the "fictional" character of such explanatory adventure, allowing for and encouraging an honest self-monitoring of the explanatory activity and its methods, making sure that "their basically heuristic character will never be eclipsed."[33]

Further, Hofstede's account of his own "field work" and – perhaps more pertinently – the way his cultural models qua taxonomies are presented to BE and management students in textbooks and other materials, encourages the fictionalising of cultural dimensions as an exclusive "explanatory fiction" in a way

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[28] Hofstede, *Culture's Consequences* 79.
[29] Iser, "What Is Literary Anthropology?" 159.
[30] Iser, "What Is Literary Anthropology?" 158.
[31] Iser, "What Is Literary Anthropology?" 159-60.
[32] Iser, "What Is Literary Anthropology?" 160.
[33] Iser, "What Is Literary Anthropology?" 160.

that eclipses their fictional character in the sense that it does not pay equal attention to "self-monitoring of all the operations involved in this study."[34] This in turn means that cultural norms qua taxonomies favour interpretative modes which prevent "human culture becoming self-reflexive"[35] and offer what Iser describes as a one-way, single use "excavatory" hermeneutics meant to uncover hidden, stable meaning and "interrelate the explicit with the implicit, the hidden with the revealed, and the latent with the manifest" instead of favouring interpretative mode such as cybernetics "operating in recursive loops" whose purpose is to become a means of controlling entropy, elucidating the individual self-maintenance of autonomous systems, and configuring the structural coupling of systems."[36]

This has important consequences for the application of the cultural models in actual intercultural encounters. Students need to be made aware that if ICC "aims to develop learners as intercultural speakers or mediators who are able to engage with complexity and multiple identities and to avoid the stereotyping which accompanies perceiving someone through a single identity,"[37] this aim cannot be achieved by a single-step application of thin descriptions based on "a super-imposition of concepts on what one is given to observe"[38] provided by static ICC models. Instead, the teachers and trainers should stress that "[h]uman interaction with its environment realizes itself through a feedback system" and build ICC models into practices relying on "thick description" and "reading"[39] which allow students to interpret themselves, the cultural other, as well as their intercultural encounters in non-essentialised ways and can "only proceed in terms of recursive looping."[40]

ICC Ethics

"If culture is a continuously emerging phenomenon" which "does not arise out of anything given, but rather out of a transformation of what is given,"[41] static ICC

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[34] Iser, "What Is Literary Anthropology?" 160.

[35] Iser, "What Is Literary Anthropology?" 157.

[36] Iser, *The Range of Interpretation* 8–9.

[37] Michael Byram, Bella Gribkova and Hugh Starkey, *Developing the Intercultural Dimension in Language Teaching: A Practical Introduction for Teachers* (Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 2002) 9, https://rm.coe.int/16802fc1c3.

[38] Iser, "What Is Literary Anthropology?" 161.

[39] Iser, "What Is Literary Anthropology?" 161.

[40] Iser, "What Is Literary Anthropology?" 161.

[41] Iser, "What Is Literary Anthropology?" 163.

models need to be framed within a practice of critical interpretation that accentuates the fact that understanding is a dialogic, recursive and situated activity accompanied by the active engagement and acceptance of ethical responsibility. As "culture evolves in unending recursions that make human beings – owing to their incompleteness and plasticity – into cultural artifacts,"[42] however unfinished and incomplete, the *otherness* of a cultural other cannot be reduced to an explanation provided by their position in a cultural model.

Instead, teachers should opt for more dynamic, adaptable notions of intercultural hermeneutic which builds on a hermeneutics of listening[43] as well as performative and cybernetic interpretative modes that entail the process of risking our prejudices which at the same time constitute our very identity. This pedagogically challenging and demanding activity presupposes a shift in the responsibility for an intercultural encounter from an explanatory theoretical model to an exploratory recursive interpretation of a specific intercultural encounter, turning students from passive consumers to active communicators and producers of meaning in a process described as

> the interplay of the modes and their strange loops, with the subconscious selection through which information and guidelines are processed, makes the liminal space into a non-linear organisation, thus unfolding interpretation and production. Understood this way, interpretation produces emergent phenomena or constitutes a source of emergence.[44]

As critics[45] of ICC have pointed out, this approach finds justification in philosophies of dialogic personalism including that of Emmanuel Levinas who reminds us of the primacy of ethics to ontology, accentuating the moment of spontaneity by the presence of the other, irreducibility of both I and the Other, and interposition of neutralising elements which disable the comprehension of being:

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[42] Iser, "What Is Literary Anthropology?" 163.

[43] Stephanie Kimball and Jim Garrison, "Hermeneutic Listening: An Approach to Understanding in Multicultural Conversations," *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 15 (1996): 51-9, https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00367513.

[44] Iser, *The Range of Interpretation* 151.

[45] See, e.g., Ferri, "Ethical Communication and Intercultural Responsibility" 7-23 or Malcolm N. MacDonald and John P. O'Regan, "The Ethics of Intercultural Communication," *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 45, no. 10 (2012): 1005-17, http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00131857.2012.753377.

> We name this calling into question of my spontaneity by the presence of the Other ethics. The strangeness of the Other, his irreducibility to the I, to my thoughts and my possessions, is precisely accomplished as a calling into question of my spontaneity, as ethics. Metaphysics, transcendence, the welcoming of the other by the same, of the Other by me, is concretely produced as the calling into question of the same by the other, that is, as the ethics that accomplishes the critical essence of knowledge. And as critique precedes dogmatism, metaphysics precedes ontology. Western philosophy has most often been an ontology: a reduction of the other to the same by interposition of a middle and neutral term that ensures the comprehension of being.[46]

A productive response to the static ICC models is thus to be sought in philosophies relying on the idea of dialogic personalism including works of Martin Buber, Emmanuel Levinas, or Paul Ricœur. These philosophies accentuate ontological and phenomenological, but also *ethical* importance – which ICC often forgets – of the recognition of the other in creating ones' own identity in a recursive play in which "we recognize what we are not and what we might be"[47] and – speaking with Ricœur's *Oneself as Other* – acknowledge the fact that it is the realisation of oneself as another which is the foundation of the sense of justice and that each identity needs the other to produce oneself – continuously, and reflexively, through the recognition of the other which "introduces the dyad and plurality in the very constitution of the self."[48] An intercultural encounter is therefore not realised solely by the dimensions of a static cultural model qua the "interposition of a middle and neutral term" but through reading culture ethically and the cultural other which in fact amounts to reading myself.

Specifically for Levinas, the birth of otherness is preceded by the approach of the other which is at the same time the birth of a moral relationship between the same and the radical otherness of the (cultural) Other. Importantly, this relationship is marked with an ethical asymmetry, a "curvature of an intersubjective space,"[49] in which one is expected to prefer the other and their needs to one's own. In this asymmetric situation, the other calls forth the same to

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[46] Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 2007) 43.

[47] John Paul Riquelme, "Wolfgang Iser's Aesthetic Politics: Reading as Fieldwork," *New Literary History* 31, no. 1 (Winter 2000): 7.

[48] Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Other*, trans. Kathleen Blamey (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1992) 296.

[49] Levinas, *Totality and Infinity* 291.

be responsible through a call or a plea, and this ethical situation frames the possibility of communication which his not marked by a flat or horizontal relationship between the same and the other but by the "dominant position of the other as a speaker" in a face-to-face relationship.[50] In Levinas' own words:

> The relation with Being that is enacted as ontology consists in neutralising the existent in order to comprehend or grasp it. It is hence not a relation to the other as such but the reduction of the other to the same. […]. Thematization and conceptualization, which moreover are inseparable, are not at peace with the other but [with] suppression or possession of the other. For possession affirms the other, but within a negation of independence. "I think" comes down to "I can" – to an appropriation of what is, to an exploitation of reality. Ontology as first philosophy is a philosophy of power.[51]

Levinasian interpretations of ICC consequently prefer an asymmetry that is fundamentally dialogical and ethical to an asymmetry based on the hegemony of monological power in which the speaker conceptualises the other as a set of coordinates in an ICC model, avoiding "ontological imperialism"[52] or "colonisation" of liminal space which "sacrifices translatability and with it the chance of to embrace more than was possible before superimposition."[53]

Similarly to Levinas' transcendental desire for otherness and Ricœur's plea for a "good life with others and for others in just institutions,"[54] Gadamer's *praxis* emphasizes the need for understanding, disponibility, and compassion for others. This kind of understanding and caring requires "sympathetic understanding" on the part of the *individual* who "does not know and judge as one who stands apart and unaffected but rather […] thinks along with the other from the perspective of a specific bond of belonging."[55] This interpretation of intercultural awareness in terms of *phronesis* or prudence represents a meaningful step towards something the ICC dimensions marginalise and cancel out: individual responsibility for one's relationships and communication situations which cannot be delegated to an awareness of an index, dimension or a scheme.

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[50] Levinas, *Totality and Infinity* 176.
[51] Levinas, *Totality and Infinity* 45-6.
[52] Levinas, *Totality and Infinity* 44.
[53] Iser, *Range of Interpretation* 151.
[54] Ricœur, *Oneself as Other* 180.
[55] Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (London and New York: Continuum, 2006) 320.

The existence of an intercultural other as an individual in this sense has to come before their essence expressed in the dimensions of a stable cultural model. This shift at the same time hopes to bridge the gap between the life-world of students' authentic experiences, or the phenomenological world as directly experienced in the subjectivity of everyday life, and the supposedly objective, mathematised 'world' of the quasi-natural sciences. This approach seems fully compatible with the current emphasis on "student-centred, collaborative approaches to learning where knowledge and understanding are constructed through interaction and negotiation"[56] rather than on abstracted 'expert' knowledge, bracketing the idea of a pre-existing world, encouraging intercultural interpretation as a continuous process, in which

> [t]his feedback system develops as an interchange between input and output, in the course of which a projection is corrected insofar as it has failed to square with what it has targeted. Consequently, a dual correction occurs: the feedforward returns as an altered feedback loop, which in turn feeds into a revised input.[57]

Consequently, a responsible methodological and pedagogical treatment of ICC models should be framed within Gadamer's notions of *praxis*, *theoria* and *technē*, systematically de-masking the status of ICC dimensions as *theoria* and problematizing their status of supposed universally applicable natural laws, and showing that meaning coming purely from "a theoretical stance is, as such, already alienation."[58] Instead, productive ICC pedagogies should focus on continuous *praxis* which is concerned with the knowledge of human beings and moral action and is – for Gadamer – always contingent and context-bound, ecological, holistic, and emergent, accentuating that "knowledge [theoria] that cannot be applied to the concrete situation remains meaningless and even risks obscuring what the situation calls for."[59] Such continuous praxis, relying on thick rather than thin descriptions and different modes of interpretation would build up on the realisation that

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56   Robert O'Dowd, "Learning from the Past and Looking to the Future of Online Intercultural Exchange," *Online Intercultural Exchange: Policy, Pedagogy, Practice*, ed. Robert O'Dowd and Tim Lewis (London: Routledge, 2016) 292.

57   Iser, "What Is Literary Anthropology?" 161.

58   Gadamer, *Truth and Method* 12.

59   Gadamer, *Truth and Method* 311.

[r]eading culture appears to be the only way of gaining access to it. There are no universals to be invoked, there are no frameworks to be superimposed, and there are no constants of human nature to be appealed to if we want to explain human behavior. Instead, culture arises out of human responses to a challenging environment […] which are subject to change, otherwise humans would imprison themselves in the products of their reactions.[60]

Teachers should make it clear that mere "knowledge" of ICC dimensions – enacted through a single step in which cultural other is identified as a member of this or that nation-culture – is neither a sufficient nor a necessary condition for efficiently encountering the otherness of the cultural other, and that – speaking with Gadamer – ground is established "as in play" and "rests on a common willingness of the participants in conversation to lend themselves to the emergence of something else."[61] An encounter between two intercultural speakers, just like any communicational situation, does not – in this sense – follow a pre-designed pattern but embodies an emergent creation of meaning, and as such it is "contingent on the exigencies of the communicative moment in which they are used"[62] and reliant on a "fictional completion of […] an incomplete and unfinished creature […] as humanity cannot be subsumed under any pre-existing frame of reference."[63]

Monologic Pedagogies

Hand in hand with the above outline of theoretical and practical considerations related to the role of culture goes the realisation that the potential overemphasis on the element of culture in ICC should be balanced out by a broadly pragmatic or ecological approach to language and understanding in which emphasis is put on the fact that language, literacy and technology all involve specific "social, material, and individual dimensions"[64] – including, but at the same time not limited to, the cultural ones. In other words, when training ICC, the element of

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[60] Iser, "What Is Literary Anthropology?" 161.
[61] Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, "Translator's Preface," Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* xvii.
[62] Quoted in Richard Kern, *Language, Literacy, and Technology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015) 35.
[63] Iser, "What Is Literary Anthropology?" 163.
[64] Kern, *Language, Literacy, and Technology* 13.

communication should not be left out of intercultural communicative competence and the whole process should not be blotted out by a totalising cultural taxonomy.

Pedagogically speaking, teachers and educators should be also critically aware of the monologic potential of static ICC models and balance out the potentially dehumanising, positivist drive of the index-based models by stressing the relational and dialogical model of communication,[65] but also of constructivist models of teaching, as ICC dimensions and models, especially those discussed above, cover up the role of intersubjectivity. Especially within the field of language learning, it is necessary to emphasise that any communicational situation – whether impacted or mediated by different cultures or not – is much more complex than cultural dimensions make us believe and significantly differs from what Richard Kern described as a "fax machine model of communication" in which "human communication is analogous to sending a message by fax: a page is scanned and encoded and […] then recovered to the original page image by the receiving fax machine."[66]

Finally, both professionals and practitioners need to move towards pedagogies which pay attention to "subtle interactions between medium, genre, register, and culture so that students can be prevented from jumping to facile conclusions about the way others think, feel, or express themselves that are based on surface language forms alone."[67] They should reject transmissive, monological pedagogies based on "authoritative delivery of facts where cultures and people are 'in' the objectified because talked about in 'ready-made form.'"[68] In doing so, it seems possible to erode conceptualisation of (cultural) identity based on territoriality, nation-cultures, tribalism, and otherness.

This would at the same time entail discarding monological, transmissive pedagogies of direct instruction which favour "monologism […] as self-interested instrumentality, short-circuiting the intended exposure to alternative perspectives"[69] in favour of constructivist approaches to learning in which "individuals create their own new understandings on the basis of an interaction between what they already know and believe and ideas and knowledge with which they come into contact."[70]

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[65] Kern, *Language, Literacy, and Technology* 34.

[66] Kern, *Language, Literacy, and Technology* 22.

[67] Kern, *Language, Literacy, and Technology* 353.

[68] Matsuo, "A Dialogic Critique" 351.

[69] Kern, *Language, Literacy, and Technology* 343.

[70] Virginia Richardson, "Constructivist Pedagogy," *Teachers College Record* 105, no. 9 (2003): 1623-40, https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1046/j.1467-9620.2003.00303.x.

Conclusion

The critique of cultural models currently dominating business school curricula should be followed up by a careful consideration of how to work with such models both efficiently and meaningfully in order to mitigate the potential pitfalls connected with their practical use. This is especially relevant, as the critique and the theory it targets are both products of different scientific traditions, modes of thinking, or even epistemologies which we might loosely label as philosophical and managerial.

Despite the monopolising tendency of some of the dominant ICC models and their contested theoretical foundations, it is the responsibility of the teachers or trainers – often BE teachers – to assure that the development of ICC takes place dialogically (that is, observing key principles of constructivist pedagogies) and through a critical dialogue between different scientific disciplines (management studies, anthropology, philosophy), their methodologies and epistemological cultures, but also between individual tools provided by these disciplines, including intercultural models.

As a consequence, any meaningful integration of cultural dimensions and models needs to be delivered in a manner which raises students' awareness of the following points: First, culture is not an a priori given, stable and homogeneous category, dimension or *essence*. Second, cultural dimensions have been constructed, and we must find how they have been constructed. Third, students' responsibility as intercultural speakers is ethical and often asymmetric, reclusive and continuous, and cannot be *done away* by using cultural indexes to classify the cultural other in the framework of a pre-constructed nation-culture. Finally, communication is not a value-neutral exchange of meanings pre-existing in individual speakers.

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