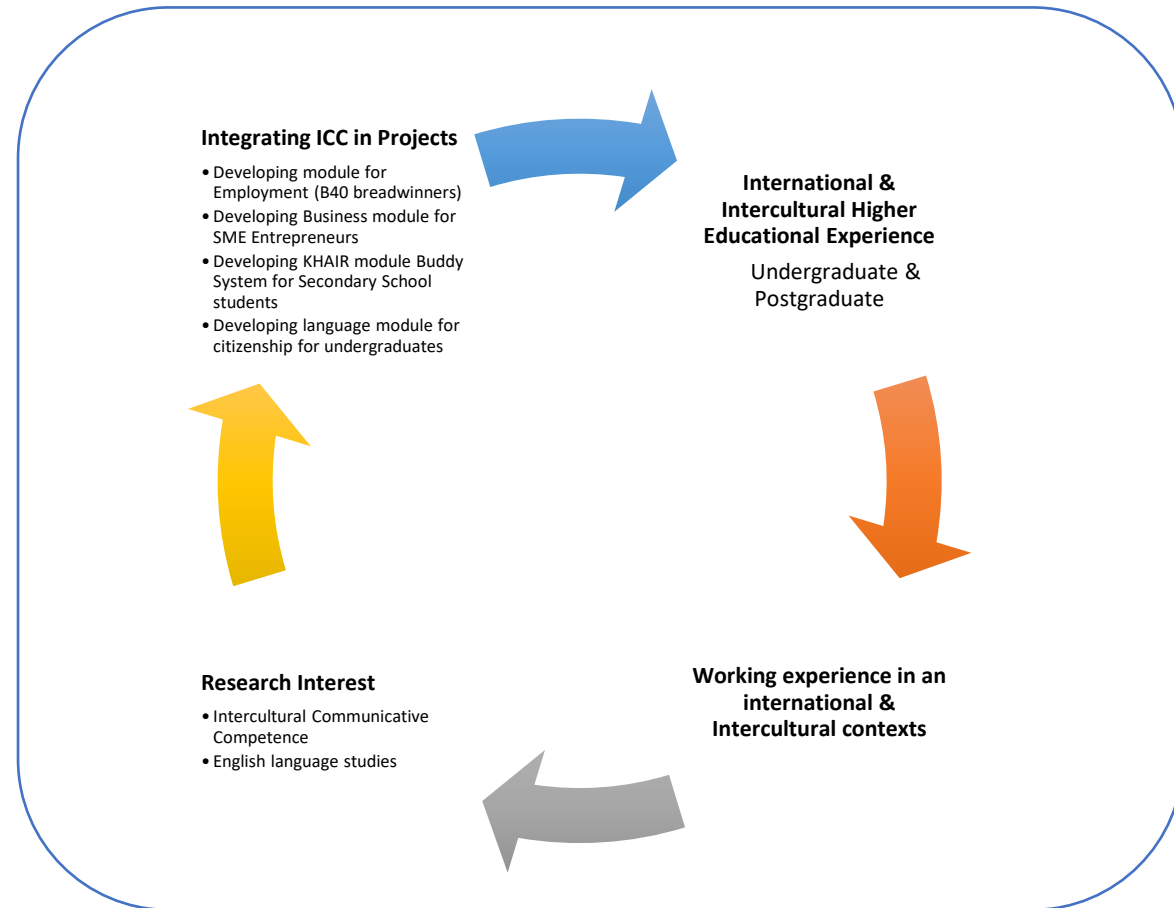


ENGAGING WITH INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE DISCOURSE IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSROOM OPPORTUNITIES, CHALLENGES AND THE WAY FORWARD

RAFIDAH SAHAR, PHD

**The 2nd International Conference on Advances in
Humanities, Education, and Language (ICEL)
Malang - Indonesia, November 7-8, 2022**

My Intercultural Experience



DEFINITION

Intercultural Communication is a “communication between people of different cultures: (Bennet, (1998: 2)

Intercultural competence refers to “the appropriate and effective management of interaction between people who, to some degree or another, represent different or divergent affective, cognitive, and behavioural orientations to the world” (Spitzberg & Chagnon, 2009:7).

Intercultural competence is the “ability to develop targeted knowledge, skills and attitude that lead to visible behaviour and communication that are both effective and appropriate in intercultural interactions” (Deardorff, 2006:241).

DEFINITION

Intercultural Communication Competence is “the ability to effectively and appropriately execute communication behaviors that negotiate each other’s cultural identity or identities in a culturally diverse environment” (Chen and Starosta, 1999: 28).

Intercultural Communicative Competence is the ability of a person to behave adequately in a flexible manner when confronted with actions, attitudes and expectations of representatives of foreign cultures” (Meyer, 1991:137).

Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) is “a dynamic process by which people draw on and use the resources and processes of cultures with which they are familiar but also those they may not typically be associated with in their interactions with others” (Young and Sercombe, 2010:181) .

INTERCULTURALITY

Alred, Byram, and Fleming (2003, p. 6): one of the main objectives of education is to promote “a sense of interculturality, an intercultural competence, which is fundamental to education, perhaps always has been so, but is all the more significant in the contemporary world”.

An interculturally competent speaker of a foreign language possesses both communicative competence in that language as well as particular skills, attitudes, values and knowledge about a culture”. (Moeller and Nugent, 2014:2)

Lavanchy et al. (2011, p. 12) : The adjective ‘intercultural’ is based on ... the idea of an encounter with otherness or meeting of different cultures . We thus address encounters between multifaceted individuals in relation to historicity, intersubjectivity and interactional context.

Holliday (2017, p. 214) : interculturality refers to “a more seamless process whereby we employ our existing cultural experience to engage with new cultural domains within which we can also find ourselves, and we make new sense of the existing cultural identities of ourselves and others”

SIGNIFICANCE AND RELEVANCE OF ICC

- Many academics have emphasised the need to focus on intercultural competence in the last few decades in the context of the higher education landscape.
- The internationalisation agenda has emphasised the value of intercultural communicative competence (ICC) among language learners in higher education in the twenty-first century.
 - Knight, later, (2003, p.2) : Internationalization at the national, sector and institutional levels is defined as the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education.
- Alred et al (2003, p.6) : One of the main objectives of education is to inculcate “a sense of interculturality, an intercultural competence, which is fundamental to education, perhaps always has been so, but is all the more significant in the contemporary world” (p. 6).
- In Malaysia, the establishment of research universities, the focus on global ranking status, and the growth in foreign student intake have contributed to the significant of Intercultural Competitive Competence (Tamam & Waheed, 2017)



SIGNIFICANCE AND RELEVANCE OF ICC

- Equipping and preparing students for global citizen and Intercultural global workforce (Green, 2012, p. 1)
 - To prepare students for 'global citizenship' (which can be defined in many ways).
 - To prepare students for the global workforce.
 - To increase international understanding and promote peace.
- Becoming functioning members of multicultural societies(Jones, 2013, p. 97).
- The demand for intercultural training increased due to Malaysia experiences modernization, industrialization, and internationalization ((Tamam & Waheed, 2017)
 - high demand of ICC in government agencies and corporate organizations specifically the Malaysia Institute of Diplomatic and Foreign Relation.



SIGNIFICANCE AND RELEVANCE OF ICC

- ICC in foreign language classroom
 - plays a dynamic and transformative role (Moloney & Harbon, 2010, p. 281):
 - helps students build an intercultural identity (Liddicoat & Scarino (2013, p. 29):
 - encourages intercultural sensitivity among members of the community (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Language, 2017; Council of Europe, 2017)
 - Equips students with knowledge, skills and awareness to avoid misunderstandings and conflicts (Bennett, 1993).
 - Increases student's motivation to learn the language when they appreciated the target language and culture (Hou-Keat et al 2017)



CHALLENGES

Research done on learning materials used in Foreign language teaching most often than not exhibits culture of the target language as homogenous and static (Eide et al 2022).

Studies on the textbooks of French in Sweden found "the representation of cultural diversity boils down to comparisons between cultures" (Canale, 2016, p. 235) and "tend to reinforce stereotypes and a static, national reasoning, at the expense of a pluricultural, heterogeneous world with dynamic identities" () and Vajta (2011, p. 149) which could reflect colonial power patterns and implicit eurocentrism (Aronsson, 2019)

Studies on textbooks of Spanish in Norwegian schools shows that they tend to reproduce stereotypes about Spanish as a language for tourism, and mostly convey simplified images of Spanish speaking countries (Eide, 2012)

Studies on Mandarin textbooks in Malaysia shows that the texts lacked cultural information about the target language (Hoe, 2016) and little cultural and intercultural elements (Chan, DeWitt, & Chin, 2018).

To prevent foreign language teaching from being a poorly established industry that exports one culture as a byproduct, there is a greater emphasis needed to represent knowledge and cultural diversity as the main component of language learning materials (Risager, 2018).

CHALLENGES

Teachers' willingness and performance in the classroom are impacted by students' poor language skills, a lack of support in the teaching materials, and a lack of understanding of ICC concepts in the classroom (see Fernández, 2015; Hauks & Vold, 2012)

Other factors such as time, ineffective methods of instruction, and limited intercultural knowledge pose constraints to teachers (Tran & Seepho, 2015)

Teachers' willingness and performance in the classroom are impacted by students' poor language skills, a lack of support in the teaching materials, and a lack of understanding of ICC concepts in the classroom (see Fernández, 2015; Hauks & Vold, 2012).

Students are still lacking in their ability to grasp ICC Skills including unable to consistently and convincingly present their viewpoints, lack specialised vocabulary, and are unable to actively engage in conversation about professional topics (Koryakovtseva 2020)

Distance learning poses a particularly pressing challenge to students' development of intercultural competence (Oftobkhon, 2020)

THE WAY FORWARD: RE[FRAMING] THE NOTION OF CULTURE

As ICC is a field that draws on multiple disciplines, a challenge for researchers or practitioners is how to position their studies amid these definitional possibilities and controversies.

Crucial to understand that cultures are **complex phenomena** and differences are not necessarily associated with regional or national characteristics (Holliday, 1999) to avoid avoiding the risk of overgeneralization or stereotypes.

Essentialist View of Culture	Non-Essentialist View of Culture
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ A physical place with evenly spread traits and membership ❑ Associated with a country and a language ❑ Has an onion-skin relationship - which is often used to describe the different layers of cultures in which similar to an onion peels, each layer of culture is enclosed by another culture (see culture as an onion metaphor by Hofstede et al., 1997)- with larger continental religious, ethnic or racial cultures and smaller sub-cultures. ❑ Mutually exclusive with other national cultures. People in one culture are essentially different from people in another. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ A social force, which is evident where it is significant. ❑ Complex, with difficulty, to pin down characteristics ❑ Can relate to any type or size or group for any period of time, and can be characterised by a discourse as much as by language. ❑ Can flow, change, intermingle, cut across and through each other regardless of national frontiers and have blurred boundaries
What People Say	What People Say
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>I visited three cultures while on holiday. They were Spain, Morocco and Tunisia.</i> ○ <i>When crossing from Japanese culture to Chinese culture....</i> ○ <i>People from Egypt cannot...when they arrive in French culture</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>There was something culturally different about each of the countries I visited</i> ○ <i>There is evidence of a more homogeneous culture of food in than</i> ○ <i>Private secondary schools in tend to have a more evident culture of sport than state secondary schools in ...</i>

Fig: Essentialist and Non-Essentialist Views of Culture (Holliday, 2011, p. 5)

THE WAY FORWARD: INTERCULTURAL LEARNING

- Learning is learner-centered, engaging, interactive, participatory, and cooperative (Byram, et al 2002; Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, 2001)
- Student assumes the role as an anthropologist, researcher, or discoverer of knowledge (Furstenberg, 2010; Kearney, 2010).
- Students actively seek knowledge about the target culture and at the same time understand their own culture thus, taking ownership of their own learning (Byram et al., 2002)



THE WAY FORWARD: INTERCULTURAL LEARNING



Connecting with
others

Negotiating
communicative needs

Intercultural
Speaker

Mediating differences

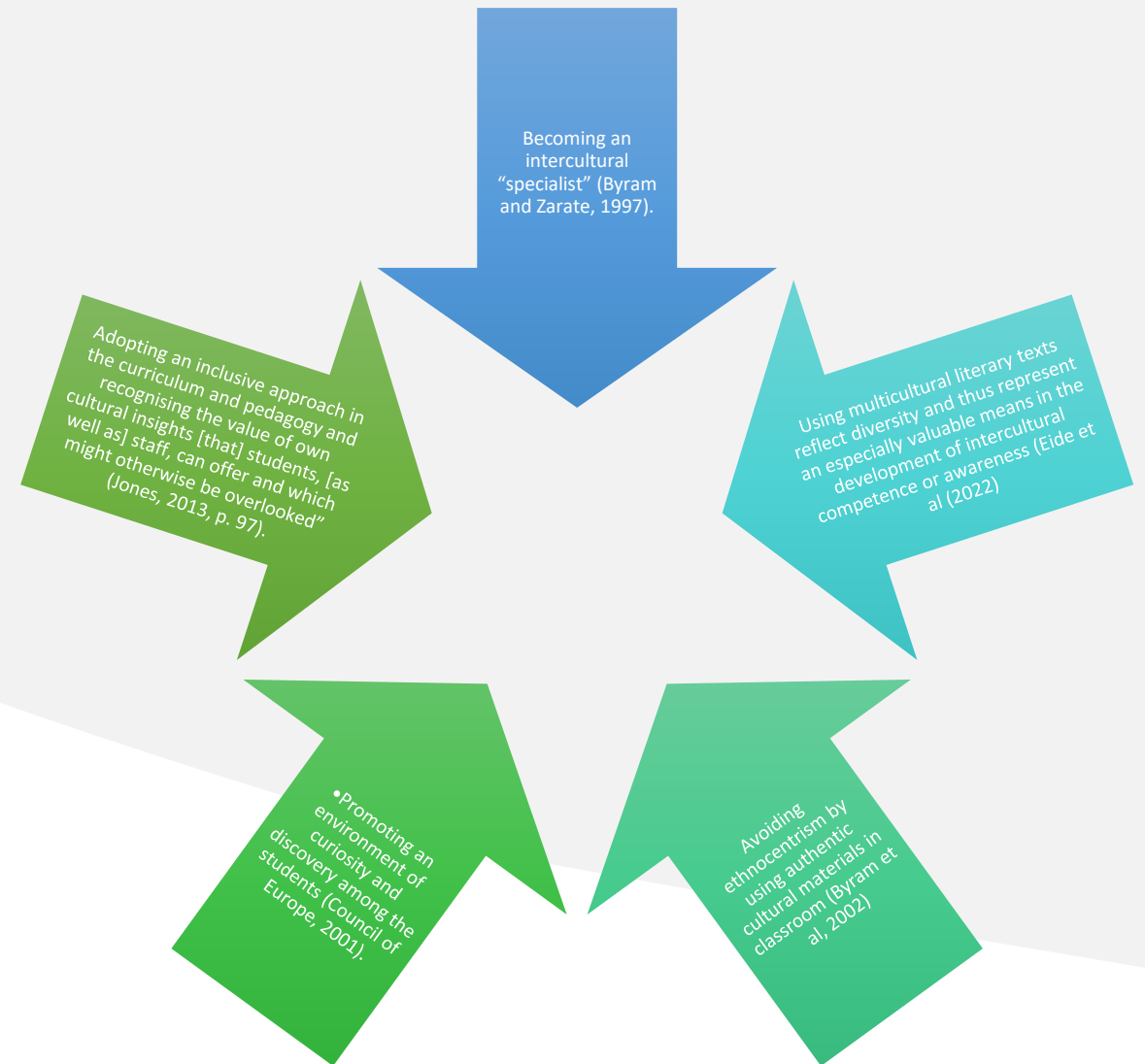
Seeking out
opportunities to learn
target culture

THE WAY FORWARD: INTERCULTURAL TEACHING

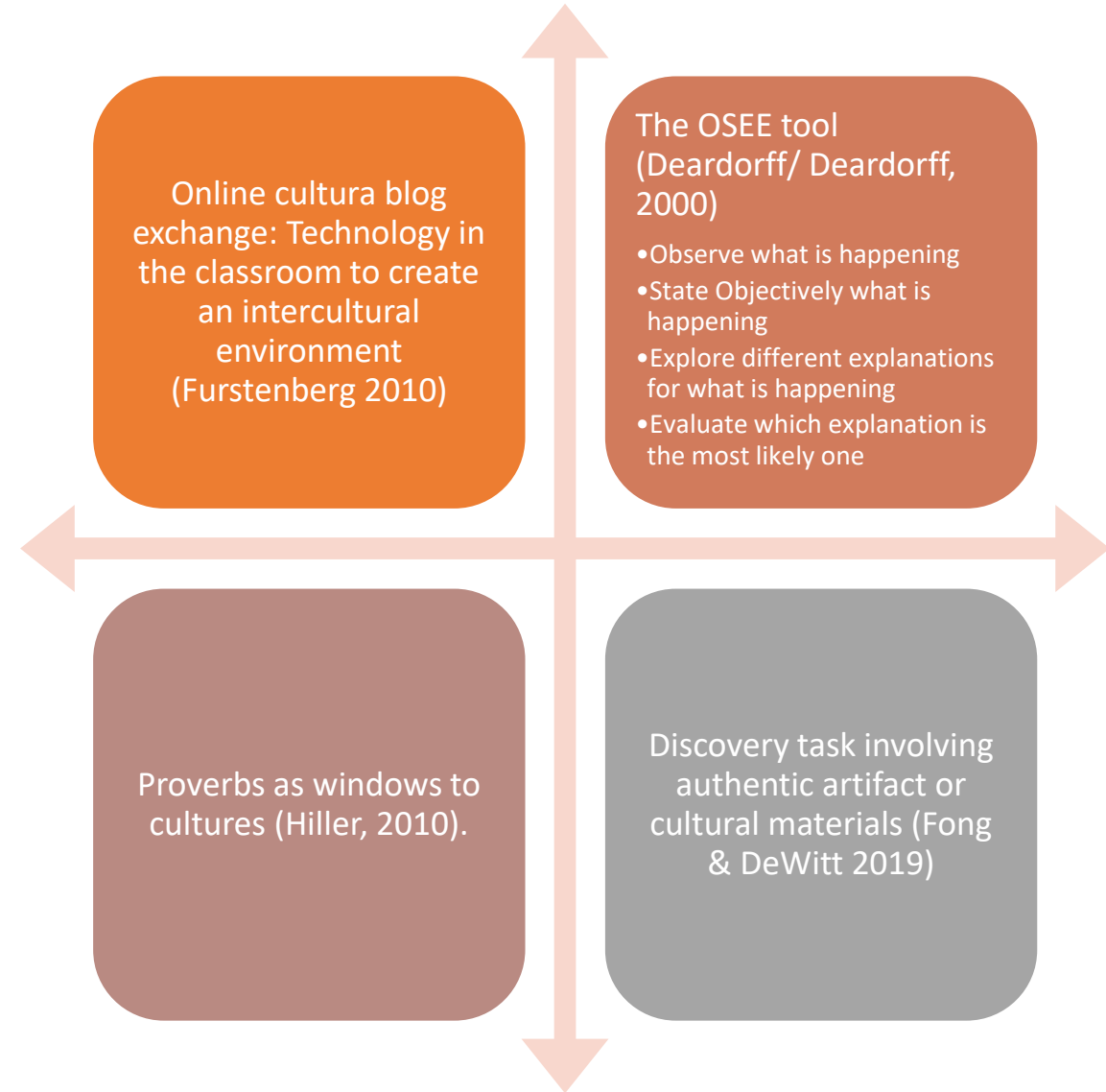


- Teachers assume the role of facilitators to guide the learning process in order to actively involve learners as they explore, discover, analyze, and evaluate meaningful information through authentic and engaging materials (Byram et al., 2002; Jabborova, 2020).
- Teachers are creators of engaging, authentic intercultural environment to promote curiosity and inquiry among students of target cultures while at the same time putting a value on their own cultures (Byram et al. 2002).
- Teachers design tasks that encourage students to become leaders of their own learning (Thao & Tan, 2017)
- Teachers exercise flexibility to allow students space for students to partake in independent discovery exercises to explore different worldviews based on common textual material (Byram et al. 2002; Shahzad et al, 2020)
- Teachers create purposeful and meaningful activities that have a clear connection with society. (Pitra, 2019)

THE WAY FORWARD: INTERCULTURAL TEACHER



THE WAY FORWARD: INTERCULTURAL RESOURCES



CONCLUDING REMARKS..

- Language development is **culturally reflexive** (Och & Schieffelin, 1995) and is influenced by the local set of qualities, beliefs, and cultural norms that formed both communicative practices and students' engagement.
- Intercultural competence **constitutes general knowledge, skills attitude** (Byram 1997; Sercu 2004) but it does not necessitate participation or speaking a foreign language.
- Intercultural communicative competence incorporates all but also includes engages in **meaningful and purposeful interaction** in a foreign language and **turns intercultural encounters into intercultural relationship** (Byram, 1997).
- It involves the **process of Interculturality** and leads to a state of being an **intercultural speaker**





THANK YOU TERIMA KASIH

Rafidah Sahar, PhD

**Dept of English, Kulliyah of Languages and Management
International Islamic University Malaysia (Pagoh Campus)**

srafidah@iium.edu.my