English for Intercultural Purposes

Giving a Voice to the Intercultural Speaker

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Overview

1. A quick look at: English as a Lingua Franca
2. Lingua Franca Communication as Intercultural Communication
3. Intercultural Language Teaching: From the Native Speaker to the Intercultural Speaker
4. Giving a Voice to the Intercultural Speaker: Bringing Together ICC & (E)LF in Teaching
A quick look at:
English as a Lingua Franca
3 Circles of English

Expanding Circle
(learned as a foreign language)

Outer Circle
(second language)
(e.g. UK, USA, Australia)
~380 million
(e.g. India, Nigeria, Philippines)
~150-300 million

Inner Circle
(native language)
(e.g. Germany, Japan, China, Russia, Brazil)
~100-1,000 million

(Kachru 1986)
What is ELF?

- English "as a common means of communication for speakers of different first languages" (but not excluding native speakers)
- rather defined by function than by (native speaker) form / norm
- context / situation of use
- communicative efficiency (meaning) more important than correctness
- hybrid, creative, adaptive
- Research: linguistic-analytic descriptions of ELF interactions; ELF varieties (forms of ELF); some analyses of function and the role within intercultural communication
Lingua Franca Communication as Intercultural Communication
- intercultural communication = communication between people of different cultural and linguistic backgrounds

- lingua franca communication always overt or covert intercultural communication (context, setting, participants) (cf. Knapp 1991)

- particular demands for lingua franca speakers:
  - lingua franca communication involves “an increased number of communicative conventions and linguistic signs” (Meierkord in Kotthoff & Spencer-Oatey 2007: 199)
  - heightened degrees of anxiety and uncertainty; speakers might feel “insecure as to what constitutes appropriate behaviour” (Meierkord ibid; cf. Gudykunst 2005, Knapp 1991, Kohn 2007)
  - heterogeneous speech community
  - (un-)common sociocultural ground
  - (un-)common linguistic ground
  - mixed bag of culture(s) and language(s) & a question of models
Conceptualizing ELF as ‘English for intercultural purposes’

- connecting ELF & ICC research perspectives
- use of English as it is “exploited in different ways for different purposes” (Widdowson 2003: 59)
- move towards functional categorizations of the English of ELF
• highlight those aspects that are particularly important for ELF’s intercultural role and functioning and which could carry pedagogic implications

• the English of ELF in this context is seen in its function of establishing, transporting and portraying one’s own linguistic and cultural background(s), which might include a mix of aspects from different ENL and non-ENL cultures and languages

• this English helps to negotiate and mediate an intercultural space within the given interaction and, above all, is the means to manage and convey intercultural communicative awareness, competence and identities

• English seen in this function = one of the few common denominators between the multitudes of contexts
Intercultural Language Teaching: From the Native Speaker to the Intercultural Speaker
Fuzzy Concepts of Culture

- “culture” not something monolithic, stable or tied to ‘nationality’
- “people communicate, not cultures” (Scollon)
- individual is actively involved in constructing their identity → person as “cultural programmer […] rather than just a ‘cultural’ member” (Lull 2001: 136)
- shift towards the ‘inter-’: intercultural discourse & processes of meaning negotiation, co-construction of meaning, or ascribing and interpreting what a speaker believes to be ‘cultural’
The Intercultural Speaker

- is someone who is able to see relationships between different cultures

- is able to mediate, i.e. interpret and explain each culture in terms of the other

- it is also someone who has a critical or analytical understanding of (parts of) their own and other cultures

- is conscious of their own perspective, of the way in which their thinking is culturally determined, rather than believing that their understanding and perspective is natural

(based on Byram 1997, Risager 2007)
Giving a Voice to the Intercultural Speaker: Bringing Together ICC & (E)LF in Teaching
Critical languacultural knowledge

Languacultural materials

Intercultural communicative awareness

Skills and abilities to communicate languaculturally competently
Critical Languacultural Knowledge

Knowledge about ELF, its contexts and manifestations:
• English in its role as an international language, its speakers and manifold contexts outside a narrow ENL-based conceptualization
• pragmatic, grammatical and phonetic realities of ELF communication (Kohn 2011) (e.g. features, structures, functions)
• get to know different manifestations of English

Knowledge about culture concepts & intercultural communication:
• different concepts underlying ‘culture’
• develop critical understanding of culture as hybrid and dynamic
• characteristics and mechanisms of intercultural contact
• models of intercultural communication and how they relate to intracultural communication
Intercultural Communicative Awareness

Ethnocentrism:
• discovering that one acts, communicates and interprets from a socio-cultural position and with a personal, cultural lens
• ‘cultural filters’ (House 2009)

Cultural load, scripts & rich points:
• understanding that language and communicative / discursive practices are socio-culturally embedded
• recognising that pre-existing knowledge, assumptions and practices are being blended, reshaped and co-constructed in intercultural encounters;
• discovering the close link between language and culture by exploring elements with high cultural load, so-called ‘rich points’ (Agar 1994) plus ‘cultural scripts’ (cf. the work of Goddard and Wierzbicka) that help spell out particular socio-cultural concepts.

• lexical and semantic awareness,
• intercultural pragmatics
Skills and Abilities to Communicate Languaculturally Competently

*Manage languacultural diversity and ambiguity linguistically and psychologically & meta-communicate:*
- communicate ‘in-between’
- strategies to elicit further information and to ensure mutual understanding
- means to signal problems of understanding or to repair communication, ask for clarification, check comprehension or common understanding; skills and strategies to simplify, recontextualize, rephrase or negotiate meaning

*Focus on meaning, trying to be intelligible and accommodate:*
- being clear about intended messages and to pay particular attention to phonetic elements crucial for intelligibility
- discovering different spoken varieties of English

*Change perspective, adjust & mediate:*
- to ‘culturally translate’ (i.e. mediate)
Languacultural Materials

i. **Source languaculture materials** which draw on the learners' own culture(s) and language(s) to work as a mirror of one’s own background and to create a basis for comparison and expansion

These can be combined with the following **reference materials**:

ii. **ENL languaculture materials** which use contents from ENL varieties and ENL communities

iii. **non-ENL languacultural materials**, which include linguistic and cultural materials based on international English speakers and cultural aspects from around the world; this includes ELF interaction materials and materials representing groups and communities other than those in i. and ii.
Questions? Comments?

Thank you!