TECH3501-18 Lecture 010 – Intercultural Competence

1   Introduction - Intercultural Competence
"Wherever you are and whatever your situation, knowledge of intercultural communication competence is now essential as any of the basics you need to learn to exist in the world" (Villar, 2017, p. 248).

2   Definitions of Intercultural Communication Competence
"Chen and Starosta (1998) defined intercultural communication competence as 'effective and appropriate interaction between people who belong to particular environments. [It is] the ability to effectively and appropriately execute communication behaviours to elicit a desired response in a specific environment (p.241)" (Villar, 2017, p. 248).

"Context specific behaviour" (p.248).

"'Competent persons must not only know how to interact effectively and appropriately with people and environment, but also know who to fulfil their own communication goals using this ability (p.242)" (248).

2.1   Cultural Differences in Facial Expressions
"When it comes to facial expressions, the general assumption is that people all over the world express the same emotion with the same facial expression. However, according to Hutson, a number of psychologists have recently refuted this view" https://commisceo-global.com/blog/cultural-differences-in-facial-expressions

3   Culture and Behaviour
"Unlike interpersonal communication, intercultural communication becomes more complex in the sense that there are additional 'cultural factors' to consider." (p.249).

"Culture, or people's way of life, involves differences in people's values and perceptions of their world and those difference influence how people communicating with each other view themselves and others" (p.249).

"Using Chen and Starosta's views, when we try to determine one's intercultural communication competence, we should look into 'the breadth and depth of the impact of culture on communication behaviour' (p.242) and relevance of that behaviour on the others" (p.249).

3.1   Emotional Intelligence Doesn't Translate Across Borders
"The expression of enthusiasm. In the United States, it's culturally acceptable, even admirable, to show enthusiasm in a business setting, assuming it's appropriate for the situation. When arguing for a point in a meeting, for example, it is quite appropriate to express your opinions passionately; it can help to convince those around you. Or when speaking with a potential employer at a networking event, it is often encouraged to express your interest quite enthusiastically; the employer may interpret how invested you are in a job based on your expressed eagerness. In many other cultures, however, enthusiasm means something quite different. In Japan, for example, there are strict boundaries about when and where people are allowed to display emotion. During the regular workday, Japanese individuals are not typically emotionally expressive."
https://hbr.org/2015/04/emotional-intelligence-doesnt-translate-across-borders

3.2   How Emotions Differ Across Cultures
https://youtu.be/P9rgC0NdZyA

4   Goals and Desired Responses
"Chen and Starosta's definition… has the following elements: Effective, appropriate, particular environments, goals and desired response" (p.249).

To be effective in one's communication this involves "using language and nonverbal codes that are appropriate to the situation. In addition, one must be familiar with the way bodily actions are used. Particular environments refer to the cultures of the participants. This suggests that during the encounter, the cultures of both participants, the host and the visitor, influence their behaviours. The communicator goals also influence how one behaves. One is motivated to say one's message in a particular way for one to reach one's goals. The desired response is what the communicator hopes to achieve at the end of the interaction" (p.249).

5   Linguistic-Cultural References

Samovar, et al, "defined intercultural communication competence as 'having the ability to interact effectively and appropriately with members of another linguistic-cultural background on their terms' (p.348)" (p.250).

"Effective, appropriate, and linguistic-cultural background. This means that for one to be competent in the intercultural interaction, one must be effective in one's communication, use appropriate language and bodily action, and be familiar with the other person's cultural background" (p.250)

"Being effective and appropriate are not enough; knowledge of the other culture is given importance" (p.250).

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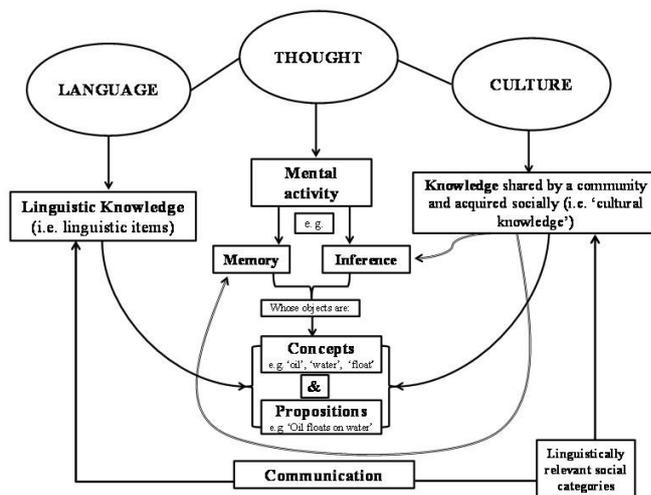
6   Interactions

Spitzberg (1988) defined the concept of effective intercultural communication as "an 'interaction that is perceived as effective in fulfilling certain rewarding objectives in a way that is also appropriate to the context in which the interaction occurs' (p.68)" (p.250).

Is a better definition of effective intercultural communication assisted by recognising the 'perceived' nature of the exchange, which "illustrates that competence is determined by the people involved in the communication event" (p.250).

7   Social Judgements

"If further means competence is a 'social judgements' about how well the person communicates with others and not just one's perception of oneself. In addition, the definition explains that the event is specific to that time and place where it happens. Thus, competence is affected by the judgement of the people involved in the event, as well as the time and place where it happens" (p.250).

IC:interpersonal Communication; MC:Mass Communication

https://www.immi.se/intercultural/nr28/kim.htm
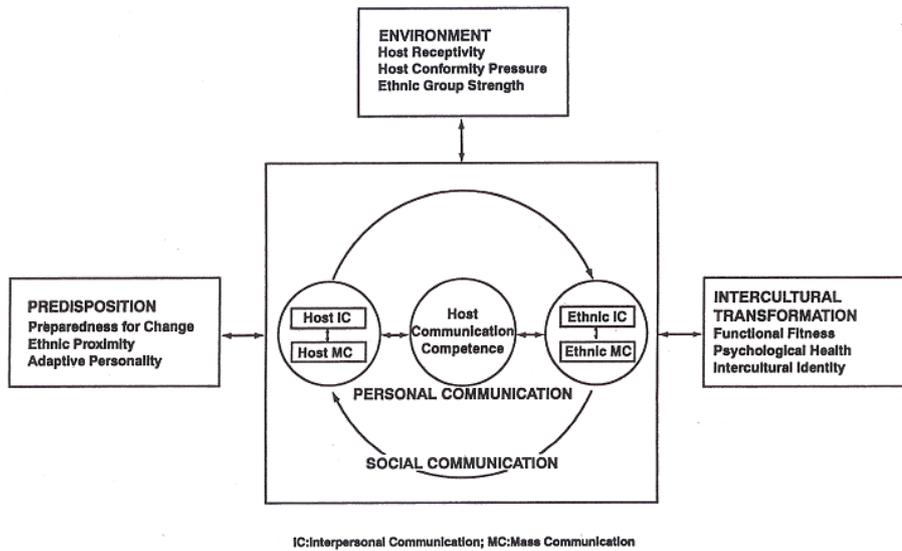
8   Effective Behaviours

"Behaviours become effective if they are seen as appropriate by the participants in the event" (p.251).

"Other important elements of intercultural communication competence are the objectives the participants want to achieve and the verbal and nonverbal messages they use to achieve those objectives" (p.251).

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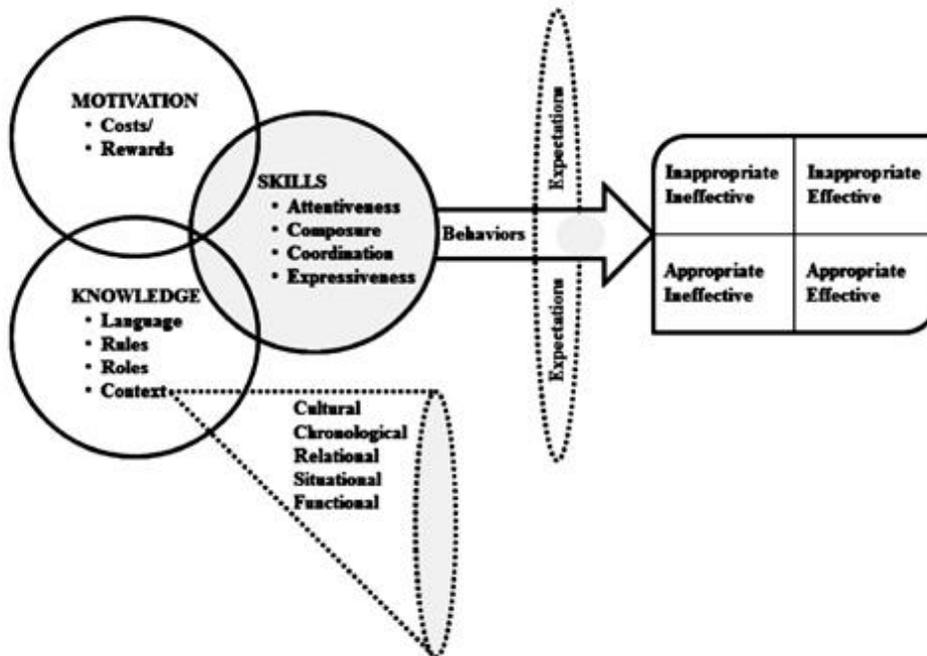
9   Perceptions

"The important elements of Lustig and Koester's definition are: perception, effective, appropriate, objectives, verbal and nonverbal messages, context and social judgement" (p.251).

10   Adaptations

"Neuliep's (2006) definition of intercultural competence is 'the degree to which one effectively adapts one's verbal messages to the appropriate cultural context' (p.441). This means one needs to adapt one's message to the other person's culture to be effectively understood. This kind of adaptation required that one possesses some knowledge about the other person's culture, have enough motivation to communicate with him or her, and have the appropriate language and nonverbal skills" (p.251).

11   Situational Competence

"Competence is measured by how effectively one is able to communicate as perceived by the other person rather than one's own perception of one's qualities. It also varies depending on the situation. This means being competent in one situation does not necessarily make one competent in the next" (p.251).

"Bennett and Bennett (2004) defined intercultural competence as 'the ability to communicate effectively in cross-cultural situations and to relate appropriately in a variety of cultural contexts' (p.149). The definition emphasised that 'no behaviour exists separately from thought and emotion' (p.149). They termed this union of thought and emotion as the 'intercultural mindset and skillset' (p.149)" (.252).

12   Mindsets

"**Mindset** means the person is knowledgeable about the new culture, his or her own culture, differences between the two cultures, and is able to use this knowledge to relate with others. This mindset also includes a healthy dose of 'curiosity and tolerance for ambiguity' (p.149) to encourage more interaction and discovery about the other culture. This means one is open to learning about other cultures and is broadminded enough to accept the uncertainty that usually happens in intercultural interactions" (p.252).

13   Skillsets

"The '**Skillset**,' on the other hand, is the ability to assess one's communication as well as miscommunications to be able to improve future interactions… The important elements are knowledge, attitude, appropriateness, behaviour, and cultural situation" (p.252).

14   Generic Abilities

"Kim (2001) mentions a number of terms to refer to intercultural communication competence among which are intercultural competence, intercultural skills, intercultural effectiveness, interpersonal communication competence, communication competence, and interpersonal competence. In all these terms Kim noted interaction is essential, together with other 'generic abilities' such as participants' competence, knowledge or one's biases, interests, abilities in verbal and nonverbal codes, awareness of cultural practice, knowledge of communication system, ability to manage differences, and ability to manage uncertainty" (p.253).

15   Intercultural Competence

"So, for competence to be achieved in the intercultural level, the following are essential elements: interaction, knowledge of self, interests, abilities, verbal and nonverbal codes, awareness of the other culture, and ability to manage differences and uncertainty" (p.253).

According to Deardorff "intercultural communication competence is 'the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations based on one's intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes.' Other definitions include 'the ability to shift one's frame of reference appropriately, the ability to achieve one's goals to some degree, and the ability to behave appropriately and effectively in intercultural situations'" (p.253).

"So, for competent intercultural communication to happen, the following elements must be present: effective and appropriate communication, knowledge of the other culture, knowledge of one's self, one's abilities and one's attitudes" (p.253).
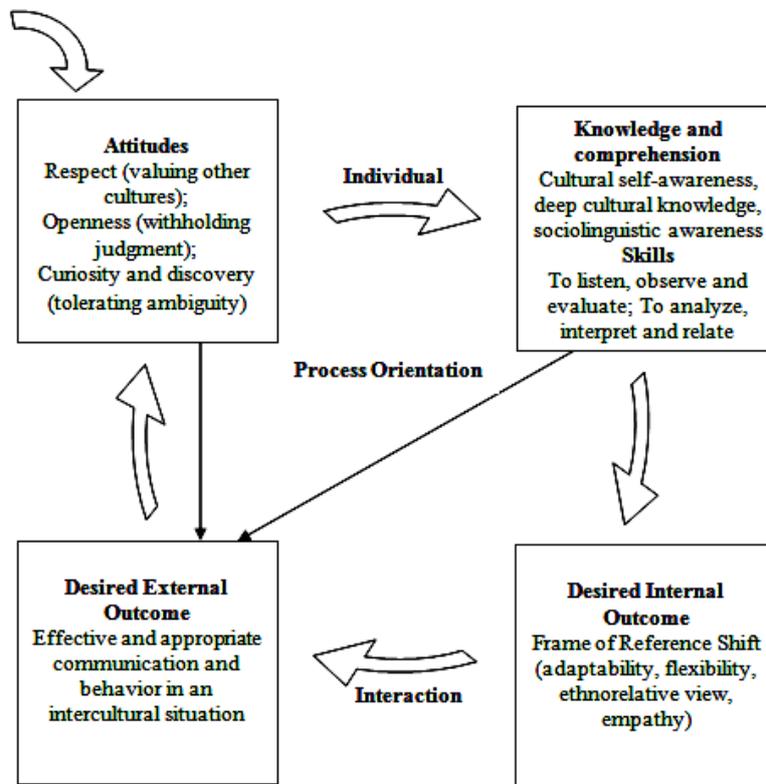
16   Dimensions of Intercultural Communication Competence
"There are four important components of intercultural competence. These are personality attributes, communication skills, psychological adaptation, and cultural awareness" (p.254).

16.1   Personality Attributes
"Personality attributes comprise self-concept, self-disclosure, self-awareness, and social relaxation. These traits develop as a result of one's experiences within his/her culture and in part from his/her heredity" (p.254).

16.2   Self-Concept
Self-concept is the "way one sees him/herself. An important part of self-concept is se4lf-esteem which is how one evaluates oneself. One who values oneself highly feel more comfortable relating not only with oneself but also with others" (p.254).

16.3   Self-Disclosure
"Self-disclosure is how willing one is to share information about oneself with others" (p.254).

16.4   Uncertainty
"Intercultural communication naturally has a high level of uncertainty and appropriate disclosure can help lessen that uncertainty" (p.254).

16.5   Self-Awareness
"Self-awareness is the ability to be aware of oneself and this improves one's adjustment to others because one becomes perceptive to one's own behaviour" (p.254).

16.6   Social Relaxation

"Social-relaxation, allows one to learn to relax to help make the intercultural interaction more comfortable" (p.254).

17 Communication Skills

"Communication skills include both the verbal and nonverbal behaviours that make our interactions possible. These behaviours include message skills, behavioural flexibility, interaction management, and social skills" (p.254).

"Message skills involve having adequate knowledge of the host culture's language and non-verbal behaviour" (p.254).

"Behavioural flexibility is the ability to choose the appropriate behaviour needed for the intercultural interaction" (p.254).

"Interaction management, is knowing how to properly participate in a conversation" (p.254).

"Social skills, includes empathy and identity maintenance which involve knowing how the other person feels and understanding their own and other's identity" (p.254).

18 Psychological Adjustment

"**Psychological adjustment** involves one's ability to deal with the stress that comes with being in a new environment. In the beginning an individual may have feelings of frustration, alienation, and ambiguity as he or she adjusts to the new culture" (p.255).

19 Cultural Awareness

"**Cultural awareness** refers to a deeper understanding and responsiveness to the new culture. This kind of awareness takes time because it involves not only knowing something about the new culture but being perceptive to what lies beneath the surface" (p.255).

"When one is new to a culture one sees the observable things like fashion, music, food, architecture and people's behaviour and not the deeper meanings that explain the observable such as social values, customs, norms and systems. One who is serious in developing cultural awareness must invest time and effort in doing so" (p.255).

20 Intercultural Communication Motivations

"Samovar, et al. (2010) advanced five components that make a competent intercultural communicator: motivation to communicate, an appropriate fund of knowledge, appropriate communication skills, sensitivity, and character" (p.255).

"Motivation to communicate means one is highly motivated to improve one's ability to communicate and goes beyond one's personal experiences to learn about others" (p.255).

21 Funds of Knowledge

"An appropriate fund of cultural knowledge is when one is knowledgeable not only about one's own culture but about those that one interacts with" (p.255).

"Appropriate communication skills means one is able to use one's skills to reach goals in interaction" (p.255).

"Sensitivity means one is receptive and aware of others" (p.255).

"Character refers to one's trustworthiness, honesty, respect, and goodwill" (p.255).

22   Context-Based Behaviour

"Lustig and Koester (2010) describe three components that make up intercultural communication competence. These are: context, appropriate and effective behaviour, sufficient knowledge, motivations, and skilled actions" (p.255).

"**Context** refers to both the relationship of the people involved and the context within which the intercultural interaction happened. One may therefore be competent in one situation where one is with certain people and not competent in another situation with a different set of participants" (p.255).

"**Appropriateness and effectiveness** refer to the acceptable behaviour that leads to the desired result" (p.255).

"**Knowledge, motivations, and actions** refer to the combination of the right information needed for the event, one's feelings and attitude toward the host culture, and the correct behaviour to carry out the goal" (p.255).

23   Interacting Components

Neuliep (2006) mentioned four components of interpersonal communication competence, these are: "knowledge, affective, psychomotor and situations features. These four components influence each other" (p.255).

"Knowledge refers to what one knows about the culture one is interacting with" (p.255).

"Affective refers to how motivated one is in participating in the intercultural event" (p.256).

"Psychomotor is how the knowledge and affective component as carried out. This includes one's use of language and bodily action" (p.256).

"Situational features refer to the event in which the intercultural exchange happens. These may be the context, their previous experience with each other, and their status among others" (p.256).
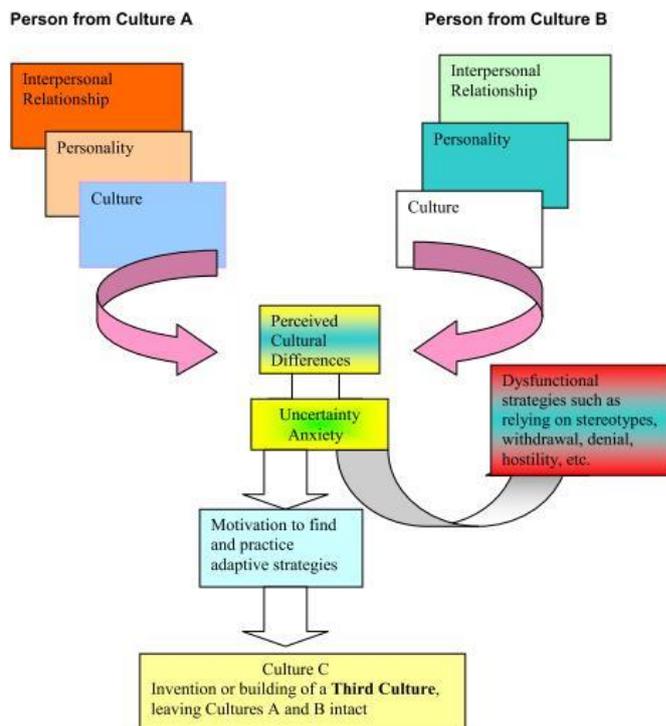

24   Interrelation Components

"Kim (2001) forwarded three interrelated components of intercultural communication competence: cognitive, affective, and operational" (p.256).

"The cognitive component refers to the mental ability to understand messages, verbal and nonverbal, of the host culture" (p.256).

"The affective component has to do with the emotion and the motivation to adapt to the host culture" (p.256).

"The operational component is the behavioural dimension that expresses the cognitive and the affective components" (p.256).

25 Intercultural Communication Components

"Deardorff (2008) presented her own list of intercultural communication competence components…

1. Understanding other's worldviews.
2. Cultural self-awareness and capacity for self-assessment.
3. Adaptability.
4. Skills to listen and observe.
5. General openness toward intercultural learning and to people from other cultures.
6. Ability to adapt to varying intercultural communication and learning styles.
7. Flexibility.
8. Skills to analyse, interpret, and relate.
9. Tolerating and engaging ambiguity.
10. Deep knowledge and understanding of culture (one's own and others')" (p.256).

26 Ways to Improve Intercultural Communication Competence

Samovar, et al. (2010) suggest ways to improve our intercultural communication capability:

"First, be aware of your culture, which means we should understand our own culture because it gives much information about where the beliefs, attitudes, and values we hold come from" (p.257).

"Second, examine your personal attitudes, or study your attitudes, stereotypes, and opinions that influence the way you view other cultures. Being aware of such things exposes us and helps us understand why we communicate the way we do with other cultures" (p.257).

"Third, understand your communication style to find out how you communicate with others and how this communication is seen by others" (p.257).

"Forth, monitor yourself; essentially we should be aware of how we behave and be receptive to the way people respond to our behaviour" (p.257).

"In addition to the four suggestions mentioned above, Samovar, et al. (2010) added three more.

"Fifth, we should be empathetic, or try to know and feel how others feel, and work at improving this by being attentive, communicative with our feelings, and to use only acceptable behaviours, and to learn to accept differences" (p.257).

"Sixth, we should practice effective listening; try to listen well to lessen misunderstandings especially when the interactants come from different cultures" (p.257).

"Finally, develop communication flexibility, which is having the ability to adapt your behaviour to people from cultures that are different from yours. This also calls for being tolerant and non-judgemental when you encounter differences" (p.257).

27   Tools for Effective Intercultural Competence
"Lustig and Koester (2010) offered two tools to help one become interculturally competent:
*   The BASIC (Behavioural Assessment Scale for Intercultural Competence.
*   D-I-E (Description, Interpretation, Evaluation)." (p.257).

27.1   BASIC:
1.   Display of respect – show respect for other person.
2.   Orientation to knowledge – show that one realises people are different and should not be judged according to their culture of origin.
3.   Empathy – show one understands how others feel.
4.   Interaction management – show skills in managing turn-taking in conversations.
5.   Related to the group problem-solving activities – show through behaviours that one is comfortable about working with others in group problem-solving activities.
6.   Relational role behaviour – show one is concerned about interpersonal harmony.
7.   Tolerance for ambiguity – show one can handle ambiguity, and that one is able to adapt to the feelings that come with ambiguity.
8.   Interaction posture – to use non-evaluative and non-judgemental actions on responding to others. This calls for the use of descriptive rather than interpretative or evaluative messages" (p.257).

27.2   D-I-E:
"The D-I-E tool (Description, Interpretation, and Evaluation) is based on the assumption that in processing information, people tend to make a 'mental shorthand' by jumping to interpretations and evaluations without paying attention to the 'specific sensory information' they receive. This shorthand may lead to misunderstandings because the other culture's meanings may be different from the interpretations and evaluations one makes" (p.257).

"Making descriptive statements can be used to describe what one sees and hears without making judgements or opinions. The advantage of doing this is that one becomes open to different possible meanings of the event rather than just the shorthand meaning one has" (p.258).

28   Summary
"In the process of being aware of different meanings, one then has the chance to sift through different interpretations and find the most appropriate one, especially in an intercultural interaction" (p.258).

28.1   Listening to Global Voices
Sure, the web connects the globe, but most of us end up hearing mainly from people just like ourselves. Blogger and technologist Ethan Zuckerman wants to help share the stories of the whole wide world. He talks about clever strategies to open up your Twitter world and read the news in languages you don't even know.

https://www.ted.com/talks/ethan_zuckerman

29 References

Villar, C. D. (2017). Intercultural Communication Competence. In S. M. Croucher (Ed.), *Global Perspectives on Intercultural Communication*. London: Routledge.