1 The Role of Intercultural and Transcultural Communication in Language Teaching

1.1 Introduction

Intercultural and, as will be proposed in this Element, transcultural communication is not something exotic or unusual but a normal part of everyday interactions for many of us. Contemporary social spaces from urban environments to digital social networking sites are frequently highly multilingual and multicultural. Work places and educational institutions are often globally connected and we work and study with colleagues from around the world. International travel to 'other' cultures for holidays and leisure is an experience frequently enjoyed by billions and a mainstay of many economies. Immigration for economic and social reasons (including war and political instability) has become a common phenomenon. While the Covid-19 pandemic may have curtailed physical movement, it has resulted in an increase in digital communication enabling people to instantaneously interact across physical borders and spaces. Given many governments' reluctance to shut physical borders during the pandemic and their subsequent eagerness to re-open them, it seems unlikely that the physical travel restrictions will remain in place for long. The linguistic and cultural diversity of contemporary social spaces, both physical and virtual, has given rise to a correspondingly dynamic and variable range of communicative practices. The complexity of these communicative practices raises difficult questions about how we understand core concepts in applied linguistics, such as the nature of language, communication, identity, community and culture. This subsequently has implications for how we can best teach language.

To illustrate this fluidity and complexity of communicative practices, an example may help. The following extract is from a study of digital communication on a social networking site (Facebook) among a multilingual and multicultural group of international students at a UK university. It is part of a private message exchange between North (Thai L1) and Ling (Chinese L1), who are discussing the upcoming mid-autumn festival.

North
1. My lovely daughter
2. Thank you for your moon cake
3. It's really delicious
4. I gave P'Sa and P'Yui already
5. and I'll give P'Beau on this Sat

Ling
6. U r welcome, and the mid-autumn festival is this Sunday, enjoy͂
7. Can u tell P'Sa, she can get her bag back now͂

(Baker & Sangiamchit, 2019: 481)

While on the surface this interaction appears to be in English, a more careful reading reveals the underlying complexity of the communicative resources used here. Firstly, and most obviously, it is English used as a lingua franca (ELF) since English is neither participant's L1. It is therefore a more variable use of English than that associated with 'standard' English (although in reality that is also highly variable); see, for example, the use of 'gave' and 'give' in lines 4 and 5. Furthermore, English here is part of a multilingual repertoire as seen through the use of 'P' to preface names (lines 4, 5 and 7). In Thai 'P' (พี่) translates as 'older sibling' and is used when speaking to an older person in an informal situation to show respect and intimacy. Additionally, the intonation marker from Thai (') is retained in the English orthography. This is also taken up by Ling in line 7, although Ling is not familiar with Thai. Given the use of this term of address by the two different speakers and the complex orthography, it is not easy, or perhaps appropriate, to attribute this to any particular language. Instead, it may be better to view it as an example of translanguaging that transcends linguistic boundaries. Moreover, and of particular relevance to the discussion here, this can also be viewed as transcultural. We see cultural practices (intimate terms of address) associated with Thai culture taken up by a Chinese interlocutor who is unfamiliar with Thai culture, and communicated through English, highlighting the diverse and fluid links between culture, identity and language. The topic of the interaction is also similarly transcultural, moving across multiple scales simultaneously. While the mid-autumn festival is tradition-ally associated with Chinese culture, it is also celebrated by many Thais, adding a regional scale, as well as having a global reach as seen in its celebration in the UK in this example. Furthermore, this interaction takes place in the virtual social space of Facebook adding another scale.

This example is presented as typical of the kind of communication that is very familiar to those of us who interact with multilingual and multicultural commu-nities. This will include many learners of additional or second languages (L2) who inevitably find themselves in multilingual and multicultural settings when using their L2. However, the extent to which such communication is featured or even acknowledged in L2 language teaching is questionable. (I will avoid the term 'foreign' language teaching for reasons that will become apparent later in this Element.) Language teaching has frequently ignored or marginalised the cultural and intercultural dimensions of communication, relegating it to a 'fifth skill' (Kramsch, 1993) to be taught only when the supposedly more important other skills have been dealt with. Moreover, when culture is addressed it has traditionally been approached in a simplistic, stereotyped and essentialist man-ner (Holliday, 2011). The focus has typically been on comparisons between cultures at the national scale and an assumption of the links between a national

language, culture and identity. This clearly does not match the multilingual and multicultural contexts and associated transcultural and translingual practices that L2 users are likely to experience in communication. If language teaching were purely an 'academic' subject with no practical ambitions, this would not necessarily be problematic. Yet, there is now general agreement that the aim of language teaching is to enable learners to *communicate* through the language being learnt. If this is the case, then it is crucial that language teaching has a proper understanding of what this communication involves. In this Element it will be argued that this communication is intercultural and transcultural communication and that it is the role of language teaching to prepare learners for this.

1.2 Aims and Outline

The aims of this Element are twofold. Firstly, it will provide an overview of current theoretical and empirical research on culture, language and communication, as well as associated concepts such as identity and community. Secondly, the Element will explore the implications of this research for L2 language teaching, particularly concerning the central concept of communicative competence and the subsequent consequences for classroom practices. However, it is important to stress that this Element does not attempt to provide a single or unified methodology for language teaching. Given the variability of communication and language use, as well as the diversity of language teaching settings, teachers and learners, there will be no single methodology appropriate in all settings. How best to implement, adopt or adapt the pedagogic suggestions in this Element are best decided locally based on the interests and needs of teachers, students and other stakeholders. Instead, this Element is offered as an attempt to promote much needed dialogue between researchers and teachers (Rose, 2019), while acknowledging that the distinction is not always clear, concerning the cultural dimensions to language teaching. It is hoped that this will result in a better understanding of the intercultural and transcultural nature of L2 communication on the part of teachers and, equally important, to greater awareness of the relevance of this to classroom practices on the part of researchers.

The Element is divided into five sections with the first section comprised of this introduction. Section 2 outlines current theories of culture and the relationships between language and culture. Approaches to understanding culture that are relevant to applied linguistics and language teaching are presented. These include culture as product, semiotics, discourse, practice and ideology. The links between language and culture are then considered beginning with

linguistic relativity (Whorf, 1939/1956) as the most well-known and influential theory in language teaching. Then more contemporary theories are discussed, such as the language-culture nexus (Risager, 2006), linguistic and cultural flows (Pennycook, 2007), and complexity theory (Larsen-Freeman, 2018). The importance of viewing language as a cultural practice is emphasised throughout, meaning that teaching and learning a language will always be a cultural process. However, languages and cultures are viewed as connected in fluid and dynamic ways rather than fixed national scale correlations. Thus, particular linguistic resources, cultural practices and cultural references come together in varied ways that can only be understood by examining each instance of communication.

Section 3 turns to an examination of theories of intercultural and transcultural communication. It begins from the position that, in L2 learning and teaching, languages will be used in multilingual scenarios to interact with people in 'other' cultural groupings. Thus, when learning and teaching an L2, it is typically for multilingual intercultural and transcultural communication. Traditional cross-cultural perspectives are presented and critiqued for their stereotyped portrayal of cultures and their lack of relevance for actual inter-cultural interactions (Scollon & Scollon, 2001). Critical intercultural communication theories are offered as more appropriate perspectives on the dynamic adaptability of languages and cultures beyond national scales (e.g. Piller, 2011). However, it is argued that intercultural communication research has not gone far enough in conceptualising the fluid links between languages and cultures in the types of complex communicative scenarios described at the beginning of this chapter. Transcultural communication is presented as an approach that builds on critical intercultural communication research but is better able to account for the diversity of linguistic and other communicative resources and their relation-ships to the multitude of cultural practices and scales that may be simultan-eously present in such scenarios. Transcultural communication is characterised as communication *through*, rather than *between*, cultural and linguistic borders, in which the borders themselves are transcended and transformed in the process (Baker & Sangiamchit, 2019). Combined with commensurable theories of translanguaging and transmodality (Li, 2018), transcultural communication provides a holistic picture of communication, encompassing a range of semiotic resources and multiple cultural scales beyond named languages and cultures that L2 users may engage with.

Section 4 draws together the theoretical and empirical research outlined in Sections 2 and 3 to explore the implications for a central aspect of language teaching and learning; communicative competence (Canale & Swain, 1980). Critical intercultural communication and transcultural communication research

suggest a more complex view of communication than that usually taken in applied linguistics and language teaching. Alongside a more flexible and multilingual approach to language, also key are pragmatics, communication strategies, multimodality, linguistic and intercultural awareness. If the aim of language teaching is to enable learners to successfully communicate through the L2 they are learning, then all of these aspects need to be incorporated into pedagogy. Thus, communicative competence as traditionally conceived is critically evaluated and the limitations for intercultural and transcultural communication highlighted. Alternatives, such as intercultural communicative competence (Byram, 1997), performative competence (Canagarajah, 2013), symbolic competence (Kramsch, 2009), and intercultural and transcultural awareness (Baker, 2015a; Baker & Ishikawa, 2021) are proposed as more appropriate conceptualisations of the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to successfully engage in intercultural and transcultural communication. At the same time, it is also emphasised that there is not one set of competences that would be appropriate in all interactions and that knowledge, skills and attitudes need to be adaptable and flexibly employed.

Section 5 turns to a focussed discussion of intercultural and transcultural teaching practices and the ways in which the research outlined in the previous sections can inform this. The section begins with a brief overview of traditional approaches, acknowledging that culture has a long history as a part of language teaching. However, this has typically involved an uncritical focus on 'foreign' and 'target' cultures with essentialist correlations between language, nation, culture and identity (Risager, 2007). Furthermore, while the intercultural dimensions are now an accepted part of theory, and increasingly language policy, this has not been translated into classroom practices, materials or assessment. Alternative current approaches better suited to intercultural language education are presented, which include critical perspectives on language and culture, de-centring of the native speaker model, expansion of communicative competence and process orientations (Baker, 2015a). This is followed by a detailed discussion of intercultural awareness (ICA) and intercultural citizenship education as approaches well-suited to the needs of intercultural and transcultural communication (e.g. Byram et al., 2017; Fang & Baker, 2018). The final section draws together the themes discussed throughout this Element to suggest the core features of a transcultural language education approach. However, just as no one set of competences are applicable to all intercultural and transcultural communication scenarios, so too there is no single methodology best suited to transcultural language education. Instead, the principles of transcultural language education are offered as a general guide for teachers to develop specific and locally relevant approaches. It is hoped that a transcultural

language education approach will inform and contribute to research and teaching that better prepares L2 users for the reality of intercultural and transcultural communication.

2 Culture and Language

2.1 Introduction

In much of this Element we will be discussing the relationships between different aspects of language, culture and communication. It is, therefore, helpful to start by being clear about how these concepts are understood. In this section an overview of theories of culture and of the links between culture and language is presented. We begin with a number of approaches to understanding culture that are relevant to applied linguistics and language teaching including culture as product, semiotics, discourse, practice and ideology. We then turn to the relationship between language and culture and explore linguistic relativity, the language-culture nexus, linguistic and cultural flows, and complexity theory. This section will underscore how language use needs to be viewed as a cultural practice but that the relationship between the two is not straightforward. This will provide a basis for a discussion of communication or, more precisely, intercultural communication and transcultural communication in Section 3. While these first sections will inevitably be quite theoretical, the theories will be linked to teaching, and they form the foundation for later in-depth considerations of appropriate pedagogy for interculturally and transculturally informed language learning.

2.2 Understanding Culture

Culture is a concept that features in many different aspects of both everyday life and academic study. It is part of political and media discussions, a core feature of the arts, and marketed and 'sold' in the tourism industry. It is also studied in anthropology, sociology, cultural studies, business studies, linguistics, health care and education, to name a few disciplines. This wide range of uses to which the concept of culture is put means that a single definition or characterisation is hard to come by. As the cultural theorist Raymond Williams has famously written, 'culture is one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language' (2014: 86). This means that 'there has been more or less a consensus that it is not possible to lay down an "authorised" definition of culture' (Risager, 2006: 42) that would be applicable or appropriate in all contexts. Nonetheless, there are various characterisations of culture that are more, or less, relevant to applied linguistics and language teaching which we will consider here. Firstly, it should be stated that culture is not approached from

the perspective of the 'development' of culture and civilisation. So we will not be considering some culture as 'high' culture, for instance the fine arts, such as painting, particular forms of music and literature. Neither will we portray other aspects as 'low' culture, for example 'pop' music, food and applied arts. Neither will we distinguish between particular societies as more or less culturally 'developed' or civilised. Instead, culture is understood from an anthropological perspective in which it describes the way of life of a group of people. Following this anthropological tradition, epitomised by the American Anthropologist Franz Boas (1911/1986), a cultural relativist position is adopted in which cultures are explored on their own terms with no connotation of superior or inferior cultures.

2.2.1 The Product Approach to Culture

The product approach to culture is probably the most common understanding outside of academia and typically found in dictionary definitions such as, 'the way of life, especially the general customs and beliefs, of a particular group of people at a particular time' (https://dictionary.cambridge.org/). From this perspective culture is described as a thing that can be defined and delineated. These 'things' can be physical items like food, art and clothing but also less tangible aspects of culture, such as beliefs and behaviour. Importantly, though, they are treated as being describable and distinct to each separate and unique culture. This approach was prevalent in early cross-cultural and intercultural communication research. For instance, the 'father' of intercultural communication research, Edward T. Hall (1966), described culture through the metaphor of an iceberg that contains all the aspects of a given culture. The metaphor highlighted that much of our culture is out of our awareness or unconscious, just as the majority of the iceberg is under the water and invisible from the surface. This product perspective is very common in language teaching, from the policy level, to materials and teacher and student perceptions (see Section 5). However, this notion can be criticised as misrepresenting culture which is not a static 'thing' at all but rather a fluid and dynamic process. Furthermore, a product approach to culture can result in stereotyped and essentialist depictions of culture in which each cultural group is clearly delineated from another by virtue of their supposedly unique combination of behaviours, beliefs, values and worldviews. Additionally, these distinctions are frequently made at the national scale with culture and nation treated as synonymous. This leads to claims of nation-based cultural differences based on large-scale overgeneralisations. Examples of this include the influential cross-cultural psychologist Geert Hofstede's (1991) well-known assertion that certain

countries, such as China, have collectivist cultures, whereas others have individualist cultures, such as Germany. Again, this can be criticised for misrepresenting and simplifying the complexity of cultures in which there will be a large amount of variation both within and across cultural boundaries, especially national scale ones. Indeed, such cultural overgeneralisations may result in the creation of stereotypes that actually hinder rather than help intercultural interactions.

2.2.2 A Semiotic Approach to Culture

A semiotic approach to culture views culture as a system of symbols (semiotics). The anthropologist Clifford Geertz is perhaps most closely associated with this perspective and writes that culture 'denotes an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men [sic] communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life' (1973/2000: 89). Unlike a product approach, it focusses on culture as created in interaction as people make use of their shared semiotic resources. As Geertz explains, 'human thought is basically both social and public – that its natural habitat is the house yard, the market place, and the town square' (1973/2000: 45). Additionally, a semiotic approach attempts to understand and interpret meaning as it is created in individual events within their cultural setting. Thus, the researcher aims to create a 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973/2000) of individual events, then connect them to the many layers of culture that give the event meaning. As such, this in-depth, individualised description is the opposite of the large-scale generalisations proposed under a product approach. Given the central place of semiotics in linguistics, it has been very influential in understanding culture in this field. In particular, Halliday (1979) has proposed an account of language as a semiotic system closely intertwined with culture. As Halliday writes, language as a social semiotic means 'interpreting language within a sociocultural context, in which culture itself is interpreted in semiotic terms' (Halliday, 1979: 2). Thus, from this perspective, language is the main semiotic system for constructing and representing culture and, at the same time, language is as it is because of the culture it represents and constructs. We return to similar ideas (Section 2.3.1) when we examine linguistic relativity and the relationship between language and culture. However, despite the more interactive understanding of culture presented in semiotic accounts, there are still limitations in how well it can account for the multiple references and meanings indexed by semiotic resources in multilingual and multicultural intercultural communication (e.g. Pennycook, 2007; Blommaert, 2010; Baker, 2015a). As

such, semiotic accounts of culture can still be viewed as overly static and fixed. Nonetheless, this perspective, in which culture and language are seen as interacting semiotic systems, continues to be central in applied linguistics and will be adopted throughout this Element, albeit with a more complex and fluid account of the relationships between them.

2.2.3 Culture as Discourse

Closely related to semiotic approaches to culture and language is the notion of culture as discourse. Discourse is characterised as ways of thinking, talking and writing about particular aspects of the world (Gee, 2008). Taking this perspective, Kramsch defines culture as: '1 Membership in a discourse community that shares a common social space and history, and a common system of standards for perceiving, believing, evaluating, and acting. 2 The discourse community itself. 3 The system of standards itself' (Kramsch, 1998: 127). Kramsch (1998) goes on to explain three dimensions of cultural discourse communities. Firstly, there is the social dimension whereby members of the community interact with each other. Secondly, there is the diachronic or historical dimension through which members draw on shared history and traditions. Thirdly, there are common imaginings by which members share imaginations of what their cultural community is including its sociohistorical dimensions. Kramsch (1998) also emphasises the critical dimension to cultural communities by which members debate, struggle and come into conflict over how the dimensions of culture are imagined and recognised, giving culture a fluid and heterogeneous nature. Scollon et al. (2012) have also put forward an influential discourse approach to understanding culture, which they describe as a discourse system. This discourse system is 'a "cultural toolkit" consisting of four main kinds of things: ideas and beliefs about the world, conventional ways of treating other people, ways of communicating using various kinds of texts, media, and "languages", and methods of learning how to use these other tools' (2012: 8). Scollon et al. (2012) caution that approaching discourse at the level of culture runs the risk of creating stereotypes through reducing people to their nationality or ethnicity. Instead, they propose that researchers explore the many different discourse systems that people simultaneously participate in, such as gender, generation, sexuality, profession and nation. Although we will continue to refer to culture rather than 'discourse systems' (discourse is no less complex or problematic a term than culture, see Baker, 2015a), it is important to recognise that people are members of many different discourse communities simultaneously. This entails acknowledging the complexity of

people's identity in which culture is just one of many communities or discourse systems people identify with.

2.2.4 Culture as Practice

As highlighted in the discourse approach, culture needs to be seen as a dynamic and changing process. This is captured in a culture as practice perspective in which culture is viewed as something we 'do', rather than something we 'have'. Thus, from this perspective Street (1993) has described 'culture as a verb' to shift the focus from the static view of culture associated with a noun to the more active and process-orientated view associated with a verb. Like semiotic accounts, culture is viewed as constructed in interactions between people and, thus, culture is intersubjective and interactive. Practice approaches focus not on the systematic nature of culture but on how 'the symbols are created and recreated in "the negotiation" between people in interaction' (Risager, 2006: 49). This also entails that culture cannot be reducible to individuals (as in product approaches that view culture as being in the mind), since it is inherently intersubjective and can only be constructed through interaction. Such a situated and process-orientated view of culture leads to characterisations that are complex, multiple, partial, contradictory and dynamic. Moreover, cultures can also be approached at many different levels or scales as we are able to observe the construction of national cultures, regional cultures, ethnic cultures, work cultures, family cultures and so forth simultaneously and without contradiction. Finally, like discourse approaches, from a practice perspective, culture involves conflicts and power struggles as individuals and groups negotiate existing social practices and norms and possible alternatives. People may choose to identify with particular cultural groups or be unwillingly ascribed to cultural groups, again adding elements of negotiation and struggle.

2.2.5 Culture as Ideology

Power, negotiation and conflict are aspects of culture that are emphasised from a culture as ideology perspective. An ideological perspective highlights that the shared systems of beliefs and ideas that make up a culture also have a moral or political dimension associated with notions of 'right', 'wrong', 'proper' and 'standard'. All groups have ideologies, so there is no neutral perspective, as Gee explains, 'Cultural models are not all wrong or all right. In fact, like all models, they are simplifications of reality. They are the ideology through which we all see our worlds. In that sense, we are all both "beneficiaries" and "victims" of ideology, thanks to the fact that we speak