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What Is Intercultural Communication?

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2.1 Introduction

Since around 1990, three different definitions of intercultural communication can be discerned (ten Thije, 2016). Traditionally, intercultural communication has been defined as all communication between people with different linguistic and/or cultural backgrounds (e.g. Jandt, 1995). According to this definition cultural groups can be attributed with specific characteristics that explain their (communicative) actions and predict potential misunderstandings in multicultural settings. A second definition restricts intercultural communication only to those communicative encounters in which linguistic and/or cultural differences become relevant for processing the outcomes of interlingual communication (e.g. Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009; Zhu, 2014). The most restricted definition states that one can only speak of intercultural communication whenever at least one of the participants changes his/her mindset by critically reflecting on the representations, value orientations and action dispositions held by his/her group (Rehbein, 2006). This range of definitions reflects the development in intercultural communication research from essentialist towards more non-essentialist models. The quintessence of the debate on essentialism concerns the question of how to investigate individuals as members of identifiable groups. For intercultural communication research this is a fundamental theoretical and strategic challenge.

The spectrum of scientific and societal issues referred to as intercultural communication will be discussed by identifying five different theoretical and methodological approaches. First, the interactive approach investigates intercultural (face-to-face) interaction. Secondly, researchers have focused on comparing and contrasting cultural and linguistic systems. A third

approach considers the images of ‘self’ and ‘other’ of collectives and nations by analysing cultural representations in various forms of (computer-mediated) communication. A fourth approach comprises studies of multilingualism and linguistic diversities. Finally, the transfer approach integrates knowledge, attitudes, capacities, reflectivity and motivation in learnable intercultural competencies. Ten Thije (2016) discusses the historical roots of the five approaches. This introduction will focus on more recent developments within and in-between these five approaches.

In this context, the notion of ‘intercultural mediation’ will be addressed repeatedly (Busch and Schröder, 2005), because it covers various concepts within the different approaches. One of the important origins of mediation concerns conflict resolution (Crocker et al., 2015). The mediation procedure is characterized by an independent ‘third party’ that fulfils a crucial precondition by assisting (international) parties to find solutions to their conflicts. This third-party concept has influenced research within other fields of intercultural communication. When people do not understand each other, an interpreter can be invited to translate. In the field of intercultural research, the interpreter is not only considered as a translator per se but also as an ‘intercultural mediator’, who could facilitate mutual understanding (Herlyn, 2005; Katan, 2013; Tarozzi, 2013). Another example of the conceptual career of mediation can be found within sociology: researchers have conceptualized communication as a form of mediation. This means that manifestations of cultures are mediated via various media (e.g. literature, tourist guides, journalism) that negotiate common ground between individuals and groups. In this sense, I will discuss intercultural competence as the ability to act as your own intercultural mediator. Figure 2.1 illustrates the mutual relations between the five approaches and the notion of intercultural mediation:

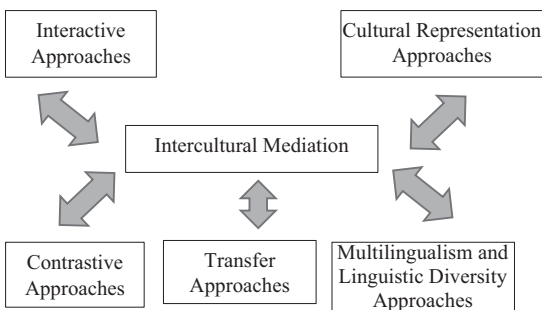


Figure 2.1 Mutual relations between five approaches to intercultural communication and the notion of intercultural mediation

2.2 Interactive Approaches

Interactive approaches to intercultural communication originate from sociolinguistic (e.g. ethnography of speaking, Hymes, 1977) and discourse analytical studies on language variations and contact (e.g. Gumperz, 1982). Communicating is a process of collaboration, a joint/cooperative action in the service of solving a problem, e.g. to create mutual understanding between person A and person B, to convince somebody, or to jointly bring about something and express cultural identities. Effective communication requires (presupposing or creating) common ground, i.e., a body of knowledge that participants in a communicative exchange share and can use to understand the meaning of what is said. Gumperz's (1982) notion of 'contextualization cues' has been groundbreaking in the analysis of intercultural misunderstandings, since it can relate specific linguistic structures to presupposed cultural knowledge in a given context. If people do not recognize the cultural knowledge that is cued by certain expressions, speech actions, intonation, code-switches or gestures, this may initiate misunderstanding in intercultural encounters.

Studies in intercultural pragmatics have examined the process of intercultural (mis)understanding by investigating 'context', 'common ground' and 'salience' (e.g. Kecskes, 2014). These concepts expand the analysis of traditional linguistic meanings of words and sentences in discourse and enable the reconstruction of understanding that is processed in and by interaction. With respect to 'context', a distinction is made between 'prior' and 'actual situational context'. Subsequently, Kecskes distinguishes three components of 'common ground': 'information that participants share, understanding the situational context, and the relationship between the participants – knowledge about each other and trust, and their mutual experience of the interaction' (2014: 155).

'Salience' is subdivided into 'inherent' and 'emergent situational' salience. It is interesting to point out how these distinctions specify the general function of contextualization cues for intercultural communication in more detail by integrating a cognitive perspective with an interactive perspective of understanding. Such analyses have also paved the way to study not only the characteristics of misunderstanding but also of successful intercultural communication (e.g. Bührig & ten Thije, 2006; Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009). A complete survey of discourse pragmatic description models can be found in Bührig and ten Thije (2005).

Within interactive approaches to intercultural communication special attention has been paid to the position of the interpreter. In cases where interlocutors do not speak and understand each other's languages an interpreter can be appointed. For instance, interpreters are engaged in official

conferences but also in various institutional settings such as healthcare, business and transnational governmental interactions. Moreover, non-professional interpreters fulfil an important function in healthcare and other governmental institutions (Knapp & Knapp-Potthoff, 1987; Zendedel et al., 2018). Interpretation studies has become a scientific discipline in its own right (Wadensjö, 1998; Bot, 2005; Tarozzi, 2013), which is relevant to the research into intercultural communication. In particular, interpreted interaction reveals cognitive and interactive structures that remain invisible in other types of multilingual interaction but are made explicit in the successive turns of the interpreter and the primary speakers involved. For instance, Knapp and Knapp-Potthoff (1987) investigate interactive interpretation strategies. In contrast to machine translation, the authors study the 'strategy of perspectivizing'. When interpreters want to signalize to the primary speakers on behalf of whom they are speaking what the true value is of what is being said, they have to indicate their position verbally. In order to do so, they may use discourse introducing formulations such as 'he or she says' to mark their translations. By making use of these perspectivizing formulations, interpreters may signalize that they are summarizing and commenting upon the wordings of the primary speakers. Wadensjö (1998) states that interpreters always rephrase, summarize or mediate primary speakers and concludes that they are intercultural mediators.

In his analyses of successful intercultural communication, ten Thije (2006) reveals that perspectivizing is also a strategy that is used in cases beyond interpreted communication, which can be found in regular face-to-face intercultural interactions. He proposes a 'discursive apparatus of perspectivizing' that comprises three steps in discourse:

- Step 1: by generalizing, an interactant verbalizes the knowledge of the propositional content as a cultural standard.
- Step 2: by perspectivizing, the speaker transmits the knowledge of the propositional content in the actual speech situation by considering the cultural standards of the other.
- Step 3: by contrasting cultures, the speaker enables the hearer to compare the speaker's cultural standards with his own and attain an adequate interpretation of the discourse (2006: 122–3).

It is interesting to note that this discourse apparatus of perspectivizing makes explicit what in the notion of the contextualization cues is inferred. The relevance of cultural differences for the understanding of interaction are made explicit to speaker and hearer in realizing the steps of generalizing, perspectivizing and contrasting. Within the framework of intercultural pragmatics one could state that these three perspectivizing steps help to shape 'common ground' by referring to 'salient' aspects of the 'context'.

In a study on 'meta-pragmatic awareness', McConachy and Liddicoat (2016) offer a similar analysis of this process of creating common ground in intercultural communication by confronting and comparing cultural frames that are presupposed in the interaction. In the light of the overall argument in this text, it is striking that the authors name this process of reaching common ground 'mediation'. They state:

Mediation is constituted by a process where the individual makes a conscious effort to consider the cultural frames that shape interpretation of pragmatic acts in each language, how these differ across languages, and what the consequences of these differences are for the use of these languages in intercultural communication. From a meta-pragmatic perspective, mediation involves going beyond simplistic comparisons of pragmatic norms to probe the concepts and meaning structures that underlie language use and view diversity from beyond the scope of a single linguistic system (2016: 17).

In sum, Gumperz's notion of contextualization cues can be linked to the notion of mediation in the way McConachy and Liddicoat describe meta-pragmatic awareness, assuming this awareness is an important underlying principle for coping with linguistic and cultural diversity in interaction in general.

This special attention on mediation should not create the impression that all intercultural communication studies focus on inclusive understanding only. On the contrary, interlocutors can also agree to disagree since power relations determine their asymmetric interaction which may end up in exclusion. For instance, critical discourse analysis has contributed to this research tradition within the field of intercultural communication by investigating discourse realizations of stereotyping, discrimination, anti-Semitism and racism (e.g. Wodak & Van Dijk, 1980; Reisigl & Wodak, 2001).

An important theoretical issue that directly relates to (in)equality and (a) symmetry of intercultural communication concerns the scale of how 'context' is conceptualized. One could distinguish between an intercultural communication context on a micro level in face-to-face communication in conversations, and the meso level in discourse that takes place in organizations or institutions. Subsequently, one can discern the macro level of the nation state where institutions or organizations have their legal basis. Finally, one considers the transnational and the global level that can be of decisive relevance to anchor and understand the aims, positions and action space of the interactants. From a pragmatic and conversational analytical framework, context is intermediated in the interaction itself (e.g. Koole & ten Thije 1994; Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009).

In this section the quintessence of the interactive approaches towards intercultural communication has been illustrated by discussing different

concepts of mediation. With the notion of contextualization cues Gumperz (1982) addressed the question of how cultural knowledge is made relevant to the process of intercultural understanding. Studies into the work of the 'interpreter as third person' (e.g. translator and mediator) revealed how understanding between interlocutors can be reconstructed in a turn-by-turn interaction process. Subsequently, it was argued that also in ordinary intercultural interaction interlocutors could apply 'third-person strategies' to anticipate and handle cultural understanding. It was claimed that these mediating strategies in fact constitute the core of intercultural understanding. Meta-pragmatic awareness is an instantiation of a third-person perspective. However, we should not forget that intercultural communication is often based on asymmetry and inequality and therefore the institutional and organizational context has to be accounted for in the analyses.

2.3 Contrastive Approaches

Contrastive approaches to intercultural communication originate from different disciplines. In the first place I will discuss second-language acquisition research and in particular studies that elaborate on the contrastive hypothesis (Lado, 1957; Fisiak, 1983). According to this theory, difficulties of language learning and teaching can be predicted by a systematic comparison with regard to the language learner's first and second languages. Consequently, major studies have been executed comparing native languages all over the world. The aim was not only to find practical solutions for language teaching (e.g. coping with inferences or 'false friends'), but also to develop universal categories to describe the typological characteristics of languages. Contrastive studies focus on differences within specific language families (e.g. Nordic languages; Bandle et al., 2008) or comparisons across language families (e.g. Japanese versus Korean, Thai or Turkish; Pardeshi & Kageyama, 2018). Pragmatic characteristics have also been included in contrastive approaches. For instance, Trosborg (2010) covers issues such as (im)politeness, compliments, terms of address, correcting self and other, and credibility in corporate discourse. Contrastive studies rely on the comparison of corpora collected within the languages and cultures under investigation.

The distinction between 'formal' and 'functional equivalence' is of major importance in contrastive investigations. The former compares the same linguistic (e.g. syntactic, morphological, semantic and lexical) features across languages, whereas the latter can be described as 'the presupposition for achieving a comparable function of a text or discourse in another cultural context' (Bührig, House & ten Thije, 2007: 1). In other words, formal equivalence concentrates on formal linguistic structures whereas

functional equivalence investigates the question of how people achieve corresponding purposes across language communities. With respect to the overall argument of this introduction, it should be put forward that looking for functional equivalencies between languages is an important prerequisite for a competent intercultural mediator. After all, being capable of using functional equivalencies to express culturally sensitive ideas or realize speech actions in another language contributes to intercultural understanding, whereas a literal translation (based on formal equivalence) could miss the point and might lead to communication breakdown.

A second contrastive approach to intercultural communication originates from the discipline of translation studies. In order to find an adequate translation, the translator has to find correspondences between the source and target language. In actual fact, sometimes a text has to be reformulated differently in another language in order to achieve the corresponding purpose in the source language. The semiotician Eco has summarized this issue as follows: to translate is an intercultural mediation act aiming at saying 'Almost the Same Thing' (Eco, 2003).

The third important contrastive approach to intercultural communication concerns studies that have developed dimensions to compare cultures. Based on anthropological investigations, Hall (1959; 1976) identified the 'high/low context' dimension and the 'monochronic/polychronic' dimension. The first dimension concerns the amount of contextual information that remains implicit for understanding communicative expressions, while the second concerns differences in tolerating simultaneous activities during one communicative event. It is interesting to note that Gumperz's (1982) notion of contextualization cues is, in fact, an interactive elaboration of Hall's first dimension, since Gumperz reconstructs how the amount and type of contextual information might contribute to understanding in ongoing intercultural interaction.

The idea of dimensions for the comparison of cultural values has been elaborated by Hofstede (1986) from a psychological and management perspective. Based on his famous research of more than 100,000 IBM employees in forty countries he developed four dimensions to scale countries regarding cultural core values. These are 'power distance', 'individualism', 'masculinity' and 'uncertainty avoidance', with 'long term orientation' and 'indulgence' added later on (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010). His model has been immensely influential in the field of cross-cultural management studies and intercultural training, which is illustrated by the fact that according to Google Scholar Hofstede (1986) has been quoted 50,000 times up to 2018. Also, inspired by his work, many researchers have developed their own cultural values approaches (e.g. Schwartz, 1994; Trompenaars & Voerman, 2009). This model was made directly applicable for global leadership trainings within the GLOBE project (House et al., 2004). The GLOBE

dimensions are: 'charismatic/value based', 'team-oriented', 'participative', 'autonomous', and 'self-protective', and the authors explain the aims of the project as follows: 'This type of research is designed to be able to predict what behaviour will be the most effective so that the leader can have more control of a situation' (Hall, Covarrubias & Kirschbauw, 2018: 343).

Hofstede's dimensions have been widely criticized. Croucher summarizes various arguments against Hofstede's model: 'for being hegemonic, too culturally generic, for not applying culture at all, for being inconsistent, and for lacking empirical support and transparency' (2017: 88). In sum, since his dimensions focus on the level of the national group, individual differences are not relevant. Unfortunately, Hofstede's epigones in intercultural businesses did not take this warning seriously and have equated individuals with cultures and with nations in their intercultural training manuals. This debate confirms the necessity to distinguish between various (micro, meso and macro) levels of contexts within the framework of the interactive approach, as discussed in the previous section, and researchers should be aware of essentialist characteristics.

Non-essentialist studies contribute to the contrastive approach towards intercultural communication by developing alternative models for comparing languages and cultures. These proposals aim to reflect the complexities and paradoxes inherent in all cultures. From an applied linguistic perspective, Holliday proposes the concept of 'small cultures':

Small cultures are cultural environments which are located in proximity to the people concerned. These are thus small groupings or activities where there is cohesive behaviour, such as families, leisure, and work-groups, where people form rules for how to behave which will bind them together (2013: 3).

This concept is related to the 'community of practice' (Wenger, 2000) and both concepts together should (at the meso level) replace the traditional unit of 'linguistic and cultural background' (at the macro level) as an explanatory framework for intercultural (mis)understanding.

From an anthropological perspective, Kruse and Uhere (2017) propose the notion of 'urban space' to compare intercultural communication since urban space connects local to global developments. This approach can be exemplified with the analyses of urban space (Drzewiecka & Nakayama, 1998) and the 'intercultural city', which White describes as: 'a city that makes deliberate use of the diversity and antidiscrimination paradigms in order to facilitate long-term, constructive interactions between citizens of diverse origins' (2018: 28). Within this framework Massana (2018: 348) has elaborated a comparable model, which includes three criteria for comparing objectives and structuring principles of intercultural cities: diversity, discrimination and dialogue.

Key for all contrastive approaches remains the point of reference that is used to account for an adequate and reliable comparison of different cultures. This point is known as the *tertium comparationis*, and it can include – as outlined above – linguistic or communicative features, the IBM company, the nation state, national cultures, small cultures, communities of practice or urban space. The *tertium comparationis* creates a third perspective that enables comparison, and it has an imminent importance to define the quintessence of these approaches considering that comparative studies do not have mediation as the core object of their study.

2.4 Cultural Representation Approaches

The third strand of approaches to intercultural communication takes place against the backdrop of interlocutors' representations of themselves ('the self') and their counterparts ('the others'), which includes an estimation of the others' knowledge states, value systems, attitudes, and cultural backgrounds and perspectives (e.g. Goffman, 1959; Hall, 1997). Studying how (stereotypical) images and expectations of the other are formed and how these images impact communication among people with different backgrounds taking into account postcolonial history (Said, 1978) makes an important contribution to the analysis of processes of inclusion and exclusion. Notions such as 'identity', 'identification' and 'othering' have a central relevance for this approach (e.g. Holliday, Hyde & Kullman et al., 2010), which focuses on how image formation is (re)produced in media but also tries to deconstruct stereotypical images in order to contribute to a more open society.

Cultural studies on intercultural communication comprise imagological investigations analysing the cultural characteristics of nations (e.g. archetypes, Beller & Leerssen, 2007; ten Thije, 2016). However, a Western bias seems to be present. In a survey of American journals regarding intercultural communication in the period between 1953 and 2004, Jackson II concludes that the field of 'ICC suffers from the residue of one-sided, singular, patriarchal, racially biased and hegemonic interpretations of cultural experiences' (2014: 88).

New developments on cultural representation can be found in media studies by joining the debate on essentialism and non-essentialism. In this connection, representations are related to the notion of 'mediation'. According to Siapera, the essentialist regime on representations operates within three themes. The first theme concerns 'continuity, the uninterrupted manifestation of identity across time and place' (2010: 150). Secondly, representations 'work with an essential core, an unchanged set of commonalities that persist over time and place' (p. 151). The third

characteristic concerns the claims of authenticity and authority: 'by asserting the right to speak on behalf of the group and by claiming to represent it as a whole' (p. 152). By operating this way, the regime creates an 'us and them distinction with outsiders'. This essentialist regime has been analysed in all kinds of studies on the representation of minority groups in mass media but also, for instance, in tourist communication (Held, 2018) on cultural and national heritages (e.g. memorial events and folklore).

According to Siapera, the alternative regime on representation operates also within three themes: 'firstly, ambiguity of representation; secondly, the creative ways in which representation deals with questions of cultural differences; and, thirdly, the multiplicity of perspectives and / or identities / images' (2010: 158). It does not aim to duplicate strict oppositions between 'us' and 'them' but tries to create permanent crossovers between inside and outside the community, and relevant studies focus on the dynamics in the representation of these hybrid identities. An interesting example of the alternative regime concerns the music video for 'APESHIT', a song by The Carters (composed of Beyoncé and Jay-Z) that was recorded in the Louvre Museum, with the two musicians standing in front of famous paintings such as the *Mona Lisa*. The video creatively represents and addresses ambiguity and hybridity by bringing up all kinds of cultural, ethnic, racial, gender, feminist, power and postcolonial issues (Hosking, 2018).

Interestingly, Siapera (2010) states that both essentialist and alternative regimes are necessary for cultural diversity. Identities should be considered as stable but potentially changeable, as only then may their representation contribute to 'mediated multiculturalism'. This concept of mediation links 'image formation' to production and consumption of representation, and also includes how this dynamic process is realized by mass and digital media. Siapera's concept of mediation can be related to interactive understandings of the concept discussed in Section 2.2 (e.g. meta-pragmatic awareness in face-to-face interaction). Both relate mediation to an inherent constitutive process in which cultural frames and images are studied beyond simplistic linguistic or semiotic systems by embracing various (micro, meso and macro) levels in investigations.

Within gender and media studies 'intersectionality' has been developed as the heuristic tool to deconstruct the complexity of identity formation and, therefore, give insight into how intercultural mediation genuinely works. Identities are manifold and determined by class, race, gender, ethnicity, culture, citizenship, sexuality, skin colour and ability. Intersectionality helps to find out how categories of identities are partially defined by their relationships with other categories. Intersectionality analysis can thus uncover the contradictive effects on self-image and other image of a specific group in different media targeting different communities.

In conclusion, recent developments indicate that studies on the representation of self and other have moved away from an imagological approach (e.g. ten Thije, 2016) towards a diversity approach in which the reciprocal determination (e.g. intersectionality) of a much wider spectrum of identity aspects can be accounted for. Consequently, these studies focus on how new mass media enrich and fragment the (re)production of cultural representations. This last development has been coined ‘mediatization’ (Agha, 2011). In this research the relationship between image production and consumption, on the one hand, and economic regularities and power oppositions, on the other hand, are foregrounded.

The contribution to debates on (non-)essentialism from this approach can be paraphrased by bringing up the distinction between ‘emic’ and ‘etic’ frameworks, which Triandis summarizes as follows: ‘Emics, roughly speaking, are ideas, behaviours, items, and concepts that are culture specific. Etics, roughly speaking, are culture general – i.e. universal’ (1994: 67). Siapera’s summary (2010) that both non-essentialist and essentialist regimes are needed to understand cultural and linguistic diversity links up to ten Thije’s conclusion that in intercultural communication research, emic and etic ‘frameworks are not considered to be contradictory but rather as complementary. In actual fact, the emic-etic distinction can be considered as a basic fundamental characteristic that constitutes intercultural research itself’ (2016: 584).

2.5 Multilingualism and Linguistic Diversity Approaches

The fourth type of approach to intercultural communication originates from (socio)linguistics, pragmatics and discourse analysis studies. For instance, studies on language contact (e.g. Clyne, 1994; 2003), language policies (e.g. Phillipson, 2003), globalization (e.g. Blommaert, 2010), bilingual and migrant families (e.g. Jessner-Schmid & Kramsch, 2015) and receptive multilingualism (e.g. ten Thije & Zeevaert, 2013; Rehbein et al., 2012), have entrusted new conceptualizations of multilingualism and linguistic diversity to counter traditional language ideologies (e.g. House & Rehbein, 2004).

As a consequence of the formation of European nation states around the eighteenth century, an ideology was established that equated one country, one people, one language and one culture. Regional language variations were suppressed in education and other governmental domains in order to establish national centres for the legal exercise of power and to found cultural and linguistic hegemonies. One could say that this ideology is still present in the essentialist notion that individuals are essentially members of identifiable groups. For a long time this ideology has also determined the

concept of multilingualism in Europe. Multiple languages were vigorous, but these were normally considered as a collection of separate, bounded, homogeneous entities next to each other. This ideology is resembled in the 'additive concept of multilingualism' (Schjerve-Rindler & Vetter, 2012; Hüning, Vogl & Moliner, 2012).

Many studies attempt to dismantle this ideology that has penetrated all sectors of societal life (e.g. family, work, school, church and government). Sociolinguistic and psycholinguistic investigations of multilingualism show that the ideal of additive multilingualism – in which, for instance, that which a bilingual can achieve in two languages, a monolingual can achieve in only one language – is a myth, in the sense that few reach this goal. Backus et al. argue that 'in real life, most people have only limited skills in standard varieties of foreign languages – and in fact, even most native speakers do not have command of the standard variety of their mother tongue as codified in grammar books' (2013, 188).

In reaction to the additive concept of multilingualism, alternative models have emerged, such as 'translanguaging' (García & Wei, 2014), 'polylingualism' (Jørgensen, 2011), 'semiotic resources' (Blommaert, 2010), 'translingual practice' (Canagarajah, 2013), and 'inclusive multilingualism' (Backus et al., 2013). These models have in common the fact that they do not take the native speaker as the normative standard to describe and assess processes of language learning and language policies. Instead these models study modes and strategies of effective and fair communication that respect cultural identities and include the linguistic repertoires interlocutors bring with them. For instance, the research underlying inclusive multilingualism focuses in particular on the multilingual communicative modes that people use to cope with linguistic diversity with limited linguistic skills. These concern the integrated use of English as a lingua franca, a regional lingua franca, lingua receptiva, code-switching and mediation by translation or interpretation (Backus et al., 2013; Rehbein et al., 2012).

Many of these 'inclusive' models have been inspired by the concept of 'superdiversity' that was proposed by Vertovec (2007): superdiversity accounts for the long-term consequences of mobility waves and multiple generations of migrants on the distribution and acquisition of linguistic repertoires by diverse communities and individuals. Comparable concepts have also been put forward. Dervin and Gross (2016) propose the notion of 'diverse diversity' in their discussion of (non-)essentialist intercultural studies. In contrast to essentialist studies, diverse diversity should help to analyse the simultaneity of various cultural identities in intercultural communication (e.g. Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010) that assume their non-simultaneity. Grin (2018) argues in favour of the notion of 'complex diversity' in his account of the outcomes of a comprehensive interdisciplinary European project on mobility and social cohesion in Europe. Grin and

Civico (2018) state that in fact two parallel paradoxes can be observed with respect to diversity. On the one hand, linguistic diversity is decreasing since small languages disappear as a result of homogenization and the emergence of English as the standard for global communication. On the other hand, linguistic diversity has increased in urban spaces where multilingual communities meet and have to live together. The second paradox rephrases the first in a more emotional direction: diversity is threatened and is threatening at the same time.

In conclusion, multilingualism and diversity approaches to intercultural communication offer a terminological framework to study the mutual effects within various (micro, meso and macro) societal levels on the outcomes of intercultural understanding. In fact, the opposition between additive and inclusive multilingualism delivers new interesting insights into the essentialism debate in general and possibly specifically for intercultural mediation.

2.6 Transfer Approaches and Intercultural Competence

Language skills are a primary prerequisite for intercultural understanding. Not only do they help one learn to speak and/or understand a language, they also help one cope with and appreciate how languages and cultures diverge in mapping onto (social) reality and shaping understanding. This is also integral to forming policies with regard to dealing with linguistic and cultural diversity at various levels in society, its institutions, education, public services and industry. Therefore, the so-called transfer approach to intercultural communication focuses on language learning and intercultural competencies on an individual level, and diversity management on a societal level.

Studies on transfer, however, reveal that learning intercultural competencies is not automatically included in language teaching. After all, language teaching has for a long time been instrumentalized to transfer national linguistic standards to the next generations of students (see the multilingualism approach). Byram can be considered as one of the representatives of the paradigm shift within language teaching. As a result of his research on the intercultural effects of students staying abroad he replaced the notion of 'native speaker' with that of 'intercultural speaker'. Moreover, he elaborates six dimensions of intercultural competence (or 'savoirs' as he calls them): attitudes (*savoir être*), knowledge (*savoir*), interpreting and relating texts (*savoir comprendre*), discovering new behaviours, beliefs and values (*savoir apprendre*), interacting (*savoir faire*), and critical cultural awareness (*savoir s'engager*) (Byram, 1997). Subsequently, the notion of the intercultural speaker was replaced by intercultural mediator in order to

emphasize the individual potential for social action (Alred, Byram & Fleming, 2002). These ideas have been elaborated by many later studies into various models to conceptualize the stages, aspects and purposes of intercultural competence (for a summary, see ten Thije, 2016). The basic assumption of all these models is that solely staying abroad does not imply an increase in competence. People have to learn to reflect on their experiences in order to be able to mediate in multilingual and intercultural situations (e.g. Zarate et al., 2004; Beaven & Borghett, 2015; Ly & Rygg, 2016; Messelink & Thije, 2012).

In line with the overall argument of this chapter, Cole and Meadows can be quoted to continue the debate on essentialism and non-essentialism:

Intercultural Education is not about telling students how to behave appropriately in unfamiliar places with unfamiliar people, but rather to provide students with the analytical tools they need to figure out how to act in each emerging encounter (2013: 44).

The tools the authors present in their study on multilingualism in Indonesia concern ‘objectification’, ‘prescription’ and ‘alignment’. With the help of critical discourse analysis they analyse how these processes are traditionally used to set, determine and transfer standardized linguistic norms in language classes. However, these tools can also be applied to introduce, explain and learn linguistic varieties that are crucial for identity construction within local or minority communities. With reference to Gumperz’s contextualization cues one could state that these tools give students insight into the details of linguistic potential that are at their disposal to contextualize meaning in interaction with culturally and linguistically diverse audiences.

Genç and Rehbein (2019) have developed another tool – ‘multilingual nexus’ – that can be used to integrate interculturality into language teaching. The authors derive the notion of nexus from the language typological tradition (see the contrastive approach). Within typological studies, nexus refers to the syntactic linkage between two clauses in one language. In a functional pragmatic analysis of academic teaching of Turkish-German studies the authors apply the notion of multilingual nexus on an interactive and cognitive level. Along these lines, they reconstruct in detail multilingual understanding in teacher–student interactions. For instance, they illustrate how interactive procedures such as a ‘comprehension check’, ‘reformulation’ and ‘reflection’ exist by the grace of a multilingual nexus of equivalent elements in both languages. One could state that multilingual nexus is a didactic application of the previously discussed formal and functional equivalencies, used in translation and interpretation studies.

These tools exemplify ‘reflexivity’ as a core characteristic of non-essentialist approaches to intercultural communication, which can be considered as alternatives to monolithic essentialist intercultural competence models (see contrastive approach). Dervin and Gross conclude:

IC [intercultural competence] should move beyond programmatic and ‘recipe-like’ perspectives. Simple progression (‘stages’) in the development and/or acquisition of IC should be rejected. As such IC is composed of contradictions, instabilities and discontinuities (2016: 6).

Nevertheless, one should not underestimate the impact, distribution and application of these essentialist models and methods in the field of intercultural marketing and human diversity management.

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter has formulated a concise answer to the question, what is intercultural communication? By taking the notion of intercultural mediation as a starting point, the interrelations and interfaces between theories, methods and studies within the five approaches to intercultural communication have been laid out. One could summarize the contributions of the approaches as follows:

1. Interactive approaches contribute by clarifying how the need for contextualization in intercultural communication can be countered by applying a third-party perspective. Intercultural mediation connotes meta-pragmatic awareness.
2. Contrastive approaches require a reliable *tertium comparationis* in order to develop proper comparisons between languages and cultures. Intercultural mediation practices formal and functional equivalencies to express sensitive issues or realize complex actions in other languages.
3. Cultural representation approaches introduce the notion of intersectionality to understand how categories of identities (e.g. race, culture, social status, etc.) are partially defined by their relationships with other categories. Intercultural mediation involves processes of identification on an individual level and evolves in intercultural mediatization on a social level: image production and consumption are always subject to economic regularities and power dynamics.
4. Multilingualism and linguistic diversity approaches provide intercultural mediation with theoretical models (e.g. inclusive multilingualism) and analytical tools (e.g. multilingual nexus) to dismantle the traditional language ideology of one nation, one culture, one language. The native speaker transforms via the intercultural speaker into the intercultural mediator.

5. Transfer approaches synthesize the contributions of the other approaches to intercultural mediation with the notion of reflexivity as general denominator of intercultural competence.

With regard to the essentialism vs. non-essentialism debate one could conclude that insights within both regimes are necessary for a mediated interculturalism. In actual fact, intercultural mediation assumes that identities are stable and at the same time potentially changeable. Finally, it can be argued that notions of third-party perspective, *tertium comparationis*, intersectionality, mediatization and reflexivity come together in the prefix inter- in intercultural communication. These notions combine core phenomena that determine the interface between established disciplines with the multiple methodologies that operate on the interdisciplinarity that epitomizes intercultural communication.

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