Adelheid Hu / Michael Byram (Hrsg.)

Interkulturelle Kompetenz und fremdsprachliches Lernen

Modelle, Empirie, Evaluation

Intercultural competence and foreign language learning

Models, empiricism, assessment

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Inhalt

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Introduction

1. From "intercultural learning" to "intercultural competence" in the context of foreign language pedagogy

In addition to the important goal of communicative competence in foreign language learning, intercultural learning has been identified, especially since the 1980s, as one of the main objective of foreign and second language pedagogy (Bredella/Christ 1995). In some approaches the two are seen as complementary – Byram (1997) refers to 'intercultural communicative competence' in order to stress the relationship of complementarity – and can be traced to the original ways in which Hymes described the notion of communicative competence (Roberts et al. 2001). The strong link between language and culture has often been stressed (e.g. Kramsch 1998; Risager 2006). Affective aspects like prejudices (Hu 1995), the importance of willingness to engage with others (Byram 1997), and the role of the pre-existing linguistic and cultural knowledge, on the basis of which learners acquire new knowledge – often conceptualised in terms of schema and script theories (Schank/ Abelson 1977) – have become increasingly important for research on language and cultural learning. Relativization and decentring from an often unconscious cultural imprint and understanding of cultural otherness have been formulated as learning goals and objectives. The notion of 'le regard croisé' (Zarate 2003) or 'to see ourselves as others see us' also helped to operationalise the concept of decentring. Intercultural understanding and empathy in particular have been thoroughly discussed in the context of foreign language learning (Bredella 1992; Hu 1997, 1998, 2000; Harden/Witte 2000).

While in the early phase of intercultural language pedagogy, the basic assumptions were founded on a dichotomous concept of cultural difference (the learner's own language and culture and the so-called target language and culture), in the 1990s the research and theorization of intercultural language learning increasingly incorporated the idea of language learning as an "interplay of cultures" (Hallet 2002). Following the development within the field of culture theory and cultural studies, culture was seen not only as a social construction, but also as heterogeneous, dynamic and multi-layered (Hu 1996, 1999; Risager 2007). At the same time, plurilingualism (Council of Europe 2001) became self-evidently not only a goal but also a pre-existing condition of language learning in formal settings, and research about migration, migration-based plurilingualism and intercultural learning were pur-

sued in parallel and sometimes in close relationship (Gogolin 1994; Gogolin/ Nauck 2000; Hu 2003).

In this new context, the question of multilingual and multicultural identity became important (De Florio-Hansen/Hu 2003; Kramsch 2003), and research began on language biographies, which tend to focus on the subjective view of linguistic and cultural learning (Franceschini 2004; Hu 2006) and the significance of the interaction of identities (Zarate 2003). This research was largely theoretical in the German context, mainly influenced by hermeneutics and cultural studies, while attempts at operationalization, empirical evidence and practical recommendations for teaching practice were relatively rare. Elsewhere, empirical studies began to relate second language acquisition research with theories of social identity and intergroup relations (e.g. Norton 2000; Lantolf 2000) and increasing numbers of recommendations for practice began to appear (e.g. Cain/Briane 1996; Fantini 1997; Huber-Kriegler et al. 2003; Corbett 2003).

In parallel with these developments, competence orientation in education systems in general and language teaching and learning in particular became one of the most important developments in Europe. The *Common European Framework of Reference* was in this respect a milestone for the development of foreign language teaching (Council of Europe 2001), and the impact of this document throughout Europe has been demonstrated by survey (Martyniuk/Noijons 2007) and by multiple translations in Europe and other continents. Of particular significance were the formulation of levels of competence – including the recognition of the value of 'partial competences – and the general orientation of foreign language teaching towards "output" and outcomes instead of, as in the past, towards "input" and content. Thus the whole process became learner-centred instead of defining what had to be taught.

In Germany this new orientation was taken up and pushed forward by the Educational Standards for the First Foreign Language of the conference of Ministers of Education and Culture (Kultusministerkonferenz 2003). In this new context, the earlier theoretical work on intercultural understanding shifted more to the question of intercultural *competence* – a term that in the anglophone context as well as in the field of business communication had already been widely used for some considerable time (Byram 1997; Mughan, this volume; Rathje 2006). In this development, the concept of intercultural competence has become – on the curricular and normative level – an important goal. In the German Educational Standards for language learning, it is said that 'the development of intercultural competence is a common task for the whole school, to which foreign language teaching can make a particular contribution', and that 'through the capacity to compare their own perspectives, values and social structures with those of other cultures in a tolerant and critical way, pupils experience an increase in understanding and strengthening of their own identity' (our translation; Kultusministerkonferenz 2003: 11).

Similar sentiments can be found in other countries, for example in this extract from a French policy document (Ministère de la jeunesse, de l'éducation nationale et de la recherche 2005):

> "As the learning of a foreign language is the knowledge of one or more other cultures, it gives access to other customs, other ways of thinking, other values. To learn a foreign language is to learn to respect the other in his/her difference, it is to acquire the sense of the relative and the spirit of tolerance, values which are all the more necessary today as the school community is tending to become a multicultural community." (our translation)

The tendency is clearly international at policy level. There is a need for research on how policy statements of this kind are operationalised.

2. Interculturality and competence – a meeting of different discourses

Research on processes of intercultural understanding through foreign language learning have been largely characterised by hermeneutic and – in more recent times – by cultural studies approaches (Hu 2007) which put specific emphasis on the *processes* of learning or understanding, and which describe complexity and context dependency, for example with respect to identity development through language learning. On the other hand the discourse about competences sprang from a vocational education orientation and has become associated with a discourse of education for human capital and economic development and the perceived need to develop quantitative measurements to demonstrate 'value for money' in education systems. The large scale studies commissioned by the OECD on international comparisons of pupil achievement have led to an agenda for reform which is already influencing thinking about learning and about schools and education in a significant way; it will doubtless do so even more in the next few years. The discrepancy made evident by PISA between the aims of education systems and the results actually attained have brought not least in Germany a number of policy measures which are expected to lead to an improvement in the achievement of German pupils (cf. Klieme/Leutner 2006: 876). The education standards which were already promulgated in 2003 by the federal association of the state ministries of education for the subjects mathematics, German, and the first foreign language (English/French) form a core element within the envisaged overall strategy for education policy. The effect of the PISA investigation in the UK on the other hand was less evident since a discourse of competences and attainment targets with numerous national assessments had already been thoroughly established.

A comparison of the key concepts and dominant metaphors of this discourse on competence with those of intercultural language teaching orienttated towards hermeneutic and cultural studies demonstrates that there is a clash of two quite different 'philosophies'. On the one hand there is a dis-

course of 'identity', 'cultural complexity', 'multilingualism', 'hybridity', 'understanding', 'patterns of meaning', 'multiplicity', 'overlap', 'intertextuality', 'meaning', 'sense' and so on. On the other hand, there is 'quality', 'competence', 'standardisation', 'strategy'', 'educational monitoring', 'inspection', 'competition', 'tests', 'capacity for achievement' , 'rankings', 'assessment', 'efficiency orientation', 'knowledge management', 'control', 'excellence' and much more (cf. Sekretariat der ständigen Kultusministerkonferenz der Kultusminister 2006). The two discourses are opposed to each other in their tendencies, their premises and methodological approaches and can be reconciled only with great difficulty. There is as a consequence, in the concept of 'intercultural competence', a particular challenge in the direct combination of two concepts from different traditions of thought, as will become evident in this volume.

'Educational monitoring' is a key word in this context in Germany. The plan is to establish – in the medium and long term – goals for every subject in the whole education system (schools and higher education) in the form of lists of competence-orientated, assessable targets. The aim of this large scale educational policy project is 'evidence based policy and practice' – a phrase long familiar to anglophone educationists and researchers – which means that pupil results will be collected on a regional level by evaluation agencies on a regular basis, then compared and – where deemed necessary – returned to schools or state education authorities. In the British context, this is a well established procedure with inspections, publication of inspection reports and national test results, and with league tables of results which parents can freely consult in order to choose a school for their children. All this is a consequence of the commodification of education and the emphasis on 'choice' as a crucial value, which began under a conservative government in the 1990s and was continued by its successor. This commodification was criticised in Britain (e.g. Grace 1994) and a similar reaction has emerged more recently in the German context in the form of a fundamental critique of the economisation and bureaucratisation of the education system (cf. Barkowski 2005; Hermann 2005; Brügelmann 2004).

In addition, there is the central pragmatic problem that there are as yet scarcely any empirically founded models of competence for most specific domains. This means that at the moment in most subjects, standards are being established whose appropriateness for various age groups has not been adequately demonstrated. In foreign languages, the *Common European Framework of Reference* offers scales of competence in considerable detail which are being used in many countries (cf Martyniuk and Noijons 2007) although not in England – where an independent 'language ladder' has been constructed.

The question of measurement is a further problem. In language itself, it is relatively unproblematic from a theoretical point of view to test for example the ability to acquire information in listening and reading comprehension, and there is considerable experience of language testing at European level

and beyond (Milanovic/Weir 2004; Taylor/Weir 2008). However, other areas of foreign language learning are measurable and testable only with great difficulty. This is the case especially for aspects of language learning connected with reflexivity, aesthetics, attitudes and ethical issues (Frederking 2008), particularly in the realm of intercultural competence.

On the other hand, this conflictual situation applies much less to the intercultural research which has been developed, especially in the USA, in the context of business communication and international management (see Mughan in this volume). Efficiency perspectives have been from the beginning more central here than concerns with identity or processes of understanding. Thus Bhawuk and Brislin's (1992: 416) definition of intercultural competence runs as follows: 'To be effective in another culture, people must be interested in other cultures, be sensitive enough to notice cultural differences, and then also be willing to modify their behaviour as an indication of respect for the people of other cultures'. The effective use of intercultural communication situations for the purpose of efficient and successful negotiation is also central to German research on intercultural competence in the context of business communication. Schönhuth (2005) for example defines intercultural competence as the ability to make appropriate contacts in the intercultural encounter, to negotiate a framework of conditions for understanding which is satisfactory for both sides, and to exchange effectively with the other (cited in Rathje 2006: 3). In these approaches, the complexity of cultural learning processes, the concept of culture itself, the role of language as means of communication, and the question of what is fundamentally to be understood, are scarcely problematised. It is therefore no surprise that the readiness to engage in measurement and testing of intercultural competence is not questioned either (cf. Deller/Albrecht 2007; Fleming/Feng in this volume).

3.   Education policy, the pressure of practice and research

As we have seen earlier, intercultural competence is a keyword in education policy in general and has an important place in preambles and in policy position papers on values education. Nonetheless the concept remains as fuzzy as ever and is at risk of not being realised in concrete ways in curricula or having a substantial role in language teaching because of the simultaneously developing pressure for visible and measurable realisations of competences. Zydatiss indicates the dilemma in the following way:

> "The question arises in language teaching as a whole whether it should fundamentally reject this outcomes-orientated thinking at least in certain parts – for example in the teaching of literature or in the content dimension of intercultural learning – or whether it should be actively involved in this process in its own interest (for example in order not to be completely ejected from the curriculum) (…) If literature teaching and the teaching of intercultural learning want

to link their aims to foreign language teaching, then they must engage actively
with the conceptualisation and validation of test tasks or at least make clear their
demands vis à vis education policy in this respect." (Zydatiss 2006: 258f - our
translation).

The pressure is great, and schools, teachers and theorists are well advised to
find as quickly as possible practical operationalisations for teaching and
learning and to present applicable models – especially for the assessment of
intercultural competence. In fact, this has led already to significant attempts
to develop exercises in intercultural competence (see for example the compe-
tence oriented tasks in Tesch/Leupold/Köller 2008; Huber-Kriegler/ Lázár/
Strange 2005) and to propose levels of intercultural competence (cf. Beacco
2004; LOLIPOP Project, INCA Project). Nonetheless there is still the problem
that the assumed developmental stages of intercultural competence are not
empirically founded and that they are presented in universalist terms, i.e.
independent of context and age of learners. Furthermore, no doubt for lack
of time, these approaches use existing concepts of 'culture', 'difference',
'identity' and 'interculturality' which from a cultural studies perspective are
questionable. What is presented under the keyword 'intercultural compe-
tence' – not least in education policy position papers – is often an agglomera-
tion of everyday concepts and attitudes which are put aside in scientific re-
search on these issues. As we see it, there is a mismatch and in part a con-
tradiction between theory building in cultural studies on the one hand and
intercultural positions focused on practical applications on the other. At the
same time it is evident that cultural theory seldom provides concrete starting
points for empirical research design or the development of teaching in prac-
tice. The challenge in the development of empirical research designs and ex-
ercises for teaching and learning is not to fall short of the established theo-
retical and empirical knowledge base.

4.   History and purpose of this volume: international and transdisciplinary research

The editors of this book organised an interdisciplinary and international
symposium on the theme 'Intercultural Competences and Language Learn-
ing. Models, Empiricism and Evaluation' in May 2008 at the University of
Hamburg. The purpose of this symposium was to bring together relevant
recognised experts from international and interdisciplinary contexts and to
create an intensive exchange on questions of modelling, developing, pro-
moting and evaluating/assessing intercultural competences, with particular
reference to the language learning context.

Why an international and interdisciplinary symposium? A colloquium
had already taken place in October 2007 – on that occasion within the frame-
work of the Conference of the German Association for Foreign Language Re-
search/Deutsche Gesellschaft für Fremdsprachenforschung – and at the time

the emphasis had been on considering the development and evaluation/ assessment of intercultural competences in foreign language teaching and learning. This had shown however that this mono-disciplinary approach was not able to take account of many aspects of intercultural competence. For example, the psychological question of the development of intercultural competences in childhood and adolescence – on both cognitive and affective levels – was not addressed. Furthermore research on intercultural competences in the context of business communication was not included although this is precisely an area where much research has been carried out, as pointed out above. Finally, it became clear that the premises and processes of educational psychology in the testing of intercultural competences are quite different from approaches taken in the humanistic-hermeneutic traditions, and these issues had not been systematically included.

It was evident that the relationship between language development and/ or language learning and the development of attitudes and modes of behaviour requires a multi-disciplinary approach. It was also clear at the time that only an international discussion of these issues would take us further and relativise national traditions of thought and contemporary national idiosyncrasies in education policy, offering a broader perspective. The Hamburg symposium attempted to close some of these gaps.

International multi-disciplinary work further reveals that central concepts have quite different semantics according to different languages and traditions of thought connected with them (for example: Kompetenz, compétence, competence, competency; Kultur, culture, civilization; education, éducation, Bildung; Identität, identité, identity, self, subject etc.) These concepts may be transformed by translation or adoption into different regional contexts, and their meanings changed. The negotiation of the meanings of these concepts – as became evident in the Hamburg symposium – is in itself an intensive process of intercultural understanding.

In this volume contributions are included which are primarily concerned with empirical research on intercultural learning processes and with the possibilities of measurement and assessment. In view of the education policy situation described above, this focus seems to us to be a particular pressing need. The main purposes are therefore focused on the following aspects:

- critical analysis of theoretical models of intercultural competence and its development;
- documentation of lingua-cultural learning processes using methods of empirical research into learning and teaching;
- intercultural learning processes in children and young people seen from the perspective of developmental psychology;
- possibilities of assessment and psychometric measurement of intercultural competence.

This combination of perspectives – from different academic traditions and from different disciplines – throws up a wide range of questions which are

significant both in terms of developing a better theoretical understanding and in terms of how educationists can respond to the societal pressures articulated by policy-makers described above, questions such as the following:

- When do children begin to draw on the factor of culture to explain modes of behaviour?
- How does subjective knowledge about the cultural basis of traditions, norms and modes of behaviour develop?
- When and how do children learn that culture affects human thinking and behaviour, and what role does the learning of another language play in this?
- How and when does children's and young people's understanding of ethnic and national belonging develop; how do stereotypes and prejudices develop?
- What kind of studies of intercultural competence can be undertaken in specific ages and/or stages of cognitive development?
- With which research approaches can cultural learning processes be reconstructed (interviews, discourse analysis, video-recording of lessons etc)?
- What is characteristic of 'cultural learning processes' (changes of patterns of interpretation, self-relativisation, capacity for empathy, attempts at change of perspective)?
- What is the relationship between cultural and foreign language learning?
- Which factors inside and beyond foreign language teaching favour the development of intercultural competence?
- Which curricular aims are appropriate for which age groups?
- With which scientifically validated methods can intercultural competence be evaluated or measured?
- How should existing models of intercultural competence and the development of intercultural competence be judged when compared with empirical research findings?
- To what extent can existing models of intercultural competence be operationalised for the classroom?

5.   Themes of this volume

This volume consists of five sections. **The first section** is concerned with conceptual questions and theoretical modelling, and the differences among various disciplinary approaches are made immediately evident. **Mike Fleming** in *The Challenge of Competence* from a language teaching and literature theoretical perspective takes a critical view of the question of assessment of competences in general and intercultural competences in particular. This analysis from a British perspective is particularly interesting with res-

pect to current German discussions on competence orientation and the diagnosis of competences in the context of educational psychological diagnosis and theory of measurement; the concept of competence is put under thorough critical scrutiny.

The article by **Karen Risager** on *Intercultural Competence in the Cultural Flow* puts the focus on the processual nature of intercultural competences. Taking a social anthropological perspective, Risager presents intercultural competences within the framework of cultural flow theory, referring to the work of Ulf Hannerz and Arjun Appadurai, and challenging widely held views of the relationship of language and culture. Risager makes the case nonetheless for a pragmatic approach to the constantly recurring question of an adequate concept of culture. In her view, an essentialising and an everyday concept of culture can be useful depending on context and function.

In **Terry Mughan's** article, *Business and Management Theories and Models of Intercultural Competence: Implications for Language Learning,* intercultural competences are considered from an economic angle. Comparison with Risager's text shows precisely just how much different concepts and models of 'culture', 'cultural difference' and 'competence' are used according to the discipline in question. Mughan addresses in particular the question of why, in research into competence in the context of business communication, the question of languages plays scarcely any part and goes on to make valuable suggestions from his own perspective concerning teaching in schools.

Arnd Witte develops in his contribution, *Reflexionen zur einer (inter)kulturellen Progression bei der Entwicklung interkultureller Kompetenz im Fremdsprachenlernprozess*, a heuristic model of progression in intercultural competence in the context of long-term language learning processes. Witte takes his starting point in the position that language learning involves identity modification and subjective learning processes which are, as a consequence, difficult to measure or indeed not measurable at all. However, in Witte's view, the development of or passage through different stages in the process of intercultural understanding can be assumed and promoted by teaching.

The second section focuses on developmental psychological research on intercultural competences. **Martyn Barrett,** in *The Development of Children's Intergroup Attitudes*, deals with the attitudes and prejudices of children towards other ethnic groups. In contrast to the Piagetian theory of fixed stages in the framework of cognitive development and attitudes towards other ethnic groups, Barrett demonstrates from empirical data, that there is a clear variation in children and young people which depends on many factors including the learning of languages. From an educational and foreign language teaching perspective this is an optimistic finding since it confirms the influence of socio-cultural factors on the development of attitudes.

Christiane Grosch and **Ernst Hany,** *Entwicklungsverlauf kognitiver Komponenten des interkulturellen Verständnisses*, are concerned with the development of cognitive cultural understanding and the capacity for abstract thinking

among children and young people between the ages of 9 and 17. Their empirical findings suggest that cultural themes could be strengthened and integrated more into language subjects – and also into other subjects such as geography, ethics and religion – from early stages (grades 3 and 5). Further research would need to focus on the question of how far cognitive understanding of cultural phenomena and attitudes such as tolerance and openness are linked to each other.

The third section includes contributions which are devoted to the conceptualisation of intercultural competence and/or intercultural learning processes from a discourse analysis perspective. **Claire Kramsch,** in *Discourse, the Symbolic Dimension of Intercultural Competence*, is concerned with an understandding of intercultural competence as symbolic discourse competence. She analyses authentic communication situations on the basis of poststructuralist, dialogic approaches which are founded on an integration of 'own' and 'foreign' and which simultaneously emphasise the dependence on context of acts of communication. She demonstrates from empirical data how symbolic competence comprises 'the awareness of the symbolic value of words, (in) the ability to find the most appropriate subject position, ability to grasp the larger social and historical significance of events and to understand the cultural memories evoked by symbolic systems, [and] ability to perform and create alternative realities by reframing the issues'. She thus argues for a comprehensive poststructural concept of a language as discourse in which beliefs, morality, values and power are constituted.

Claus Altmayer, in *Instrumente für die empirische Erforschung kultureller Lernprozesse im Kontext Deutsch als Fremdsprache*, takes his starting point in a cultural studies and hermeneutic perspective and focuses on the construction of meaning and patterns of interpretation in the process of cultural awareness and understanding. He demonstrates the micro processes of the activation, the testing and the rejection of one's own patterns of interpretation on the basis of empirical data (interpretations of a photo with multilayered implications of meaning).

Mark Bechtel, too, addresses in his text, *Empirische Untersuchung zu interkulturellem Lernen in deutsch-französischen Tandemkursen mit Hilfe der Diskursanalyse*, the empirical demonstration at a micro-level of intercultural teaching and learning processes of learners as social actors. For him the the focus of attention is the concept of perspective change, the mental act of taking changing perspectives. Using dialogues of tandem partners from Germany and France, he shows where and how perspective changes arise and/or are completed; in other words, how intercultural learning processes take place on a micro-level.

The **fourth section** deals with the measurement of intercultural competence as this was carried out in the context of the DESI study (Deutsch-Englisch-Schülerleistungen-International). This is a large scale study in which a strati-

fied sample of 10,000 grade 9 pupils were tested on their competences in English and German. In this study, *inter alia*, there was a measurement of their intercultural competence on the basis of the *Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity* (DMIS) (Bennett 1993; Bennett/Bennett/Allen 2003).

Hermann-Günter Hesse who carried out this part of the investigation with Kerstin Göbel describes in his contribution, *Zur Messung interkultureller Kompetenz aus psychologischer Sicht*, the challenges which such a measurement process involves. One main problem here lies in the underlying Bennett model in which a developmental sequence is postulated which people with increasing processing of intercultural experiences follow. This – strongly normative – sequence of developmental stages according to Hesse is in fact not self-evident and this is one reason for using this model only as a typology of tendencies and not as a model.

Günter Nold is equally active in the DESI study and in his text, *Assessing Components of Intercultural Competence – Reflections on DESI and Consequences*, asks about the relationship between components of intercultural competence, especially the relationship between socio-pragmatic language awareness and intercultural sensitivity. Here too there is a need for more work to take the DESI study further and to investigate the relationship between linguistic knowledge and language competences with respect to intercultural sensitivity.

In her contribution, *Die Implementierung interkultureller Inhalte und interkulturellen Lernens im Englischunterricht – die Bedeutung der Kulturkontakterfahrung der Lehrenden*, **Kerstin Göbel** asks about the preconditions and competences of teachers for intercultural foreign language teaching. After it became clear in the DESI study that many teachers have difficulty in integrating intercultural tasks into their teaching or, if they do, are limited to declarative cultural knowledge, she presents here the results of a pilot study in which the influence of sojourns abroad on teachers' practices in the classroom is investigated.

Finally**, Stefan Papenberg** reports in *Die Überwindung von Ethnozentrismus im Englischunterricht: eine empirische Studie,* an intervention study which lasted half a year in a 10th Grade class. First there was a pre-test on the basis of the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) – unfortunately not easily accessible – with the help of which pupils were allocated to one of the stages in the Bennett model in respect of their intercultural sensitivity. Three series of lessons with different intercultural contents were taught whilst a control group received their normal English lessons. After this intervention the IDI test was administered again and the results, which of course have to be interpreted with care, show a discernible potential for literary texts in intercultural foreign language teaching.

The contributions of the **sixth and final section** consider alternative approaches to the assessment of intercultural competences. In his *Evaluation and/or Assessment of Intercultural Competence*, **Mike Byram** argues for pedago-

gical self-evaluation of intercultural competences with the help of the *Auto-biography of Intercultural Encounters* (AIE) developed at the Council of Europe. Byram sees the main problem in the assessment of intercultural competences in the implicit question of the values in judgements about attitudes or behaviour which also become clear in Bennett's model. He criticises the underlying normativity in apparently descriptive models.

Anwei Feng and **Mike Fleming** in their article, *Assessing Intercultural Competence for Purpose - the SAILSA Project*, present a mixed form of evaluation of intercultural competences which includes both psychometric elements, critical incidents and autobiographical components. The point here is that the assessment is for specific purposes, in this case for students from so-called Confucian Heritage Cultures (China, Taiwan, Japan, South Korea, Singapore, Hong Kong) who wish to study in western countries.

In his article „*Flaggen, Baguettes, auch wenn's komisch klingt, das Aussehen der Leute erinnert an Frankreich". Von den Herausforderungen, interkulturelle Kompetenz im Kontext von Fremdsprachenunterricht zu evaluieren*, **Jan-Oliver Eberhardt** reports on an empirical study with pupils in Grade 10 which deals with the research questions: Which partial aspects of intercultural competence are evident in the pupils? Are there differences in level discernible among the pupils investigated? And what is the relationship of the results of the investigation to attainment targets formulated in the German education standards for the first foreign language with respect to intercultural competence? Eberhardt attempts to develop on the basis of his analysis descriptors and indicators of intercultural partial competences which could take further the systematic development required in the education standards.

Daniela Caspari and **Andrea Schinschke,** in *Aufgaben zur Feststellung und Überprüfung interkultureller Kompetenzen im Fremdsprachenunterricht – Entwurf einer Typologie,* turn concretely to the question of school foreign language teaching and analyse existing test tasks with an intercultural dimension on the basis of their model of intercultural competence. This analysis is particularly valuable with a view to systematising the various subareas of intercultural competence and developing criteria for different expectations and levels of difficulty.

6.   Open questions

Concepts of culture and epistemological premises

Different concepts of culture are evident in this volume as throughout the research literature. The central question is not only a matter of conceptualising culture as a dynamic and heterogeneous system – in contrast to images of homogenous and separable cultures. It is the way in which culture is understood epistemologically which is more decisive: either as constantly re-created from within – through discourse as for example Karen Risager and Claire Kramsch point out – or as an entity to be defined from an external viewpoint. The contributors to this volume and the disciplines involved deal with this issue in different ways. For example in the DESI study the approach was through judgements made on *critical incidents* – with the emphasis on the particularities of *English* culture. The extreme cultural heterogeneity – found particularly in the London region – is excluded. Similarly, in the work of Feng and Fleming, *Confucian Heritage Cultures* are presented as a cultural entity, which implies the postulation of certain common cultural characteristics. However, even approaches which work with the concept of construction of meaning as the central paradigm choose informants from differrent cultures in order to investigate intercultural learning (for example in the contributions from Altmayer and Bechtel), and this means the category 'origin' is brought indirectly into the equation.

This shows that above all in interdisciplinary discourse it is necessary to make explicit the theoretical premises – not least with respect to the cultural perspectives of the researchers themselves. In this regard it is particularly interesting to consider how far essentialist and difference-orientated or homogenising concepts of culture (Bennett being a clear example of difference orientation) are acceptable according to context and function – for example in pedagogical contexts. Some authors in this volume (for example Risager, Caspari/Schinschke and Bechtel) argue for a pragmatic approach to the concept of culture. On the other hand there remains the question of whether such a procedure lags behind established concepts in cultural theory, and whether there ought to be – in the context of intercultural learning too – differrentiation and reflection on a theoretical level about central concepts such as 'culture', 'stereotype', own/foreign, 'understanding' etc.

On the relationships among separate components of intercultural competence

There is in many approaches – including some in this volume – a consensus about the fact that intercultural competence consists of various components.

The rough distinctions of attitudinal, knowledge and behavioural components are common. Nonetheless, despite this consensus, there are multiple open questions. Are the constituents/components each indispensable/necessary? In which synergetic combination are they considered to be adequate in order to guarantee competent intercultural actions? Are they hierarchically organized? How would they then be weighted? How should the semantic, pragmatic, and empirical relation between the components be determined? How do they arise, in which kind of learning processes (e.g. biographic-episodic) and do they develop separately or in parallel? How much can they be developed through instruction? Further research might for example ask a question about the relationship between knowledge about a country – about for example its political, historical or geographical facts – and attitudes towards it: under what conditions knowledge correlates with positive attitudes.

On the other hand, educationists may decide that some level of pedagogical simplification is needed in curriculum planning and implementation, and research which considers relationships among components of intercultural and communicative/linguistic competence could support the decision-making in curriculum design.

On the relationship of linguistic competence and intercultural competences

An interdisciplinary vision is particularly helpful in showing how differently these two aspects of competence are seen. As Mughan shows, intercultural competence research in the context of business communication is characterised by a consistent lack of attention to the linguistic aspect. Questions such as: 'In which language does communication take place?' or 'What influence does lingua franca communication have on the conversation process?' are not debated here. Intercultural competence appears as a competence which is separated from (foreign) language and communicative competence. This disregard of the language aspect is difficult to accept from a discourse theoretical and foreign language teaching viewpoint. As Göller argues, 'Human sense-making, intra- or intercultural communication and interaction (…) is above all connected to language or is mediated through language. This is the case for all forms of intra- and intercultural exchange. Language and culture are closely interwoven' (2000: 330f) (our translation).

The other extreme is found in Bennett, Bennett and Allen (2003: 255) where the foreign language level and the stages of intercultural sensitivity in Bennett's model are placed in direct relationship with each other and thus the beginner in a foreign language is said typically to present ethnocentric attitudes. This too is difficult to accept since intercultural competences are not dependent on foreign language competences alone. Furthermore the relationship between linguistic competence development and the development of attitudes to cultural otherness has not yet been empirically investi-

gated; here is a need for more research on this. A further research question should be the relationship between the plurilingualism which is unsystematically acquired through migration, and intercultural competences.

On the problem of developmental models of intercultural competence

Bennett's model of intercultural sensitivity (Bennett 1993) is a well known developmental model of intercultural competence and it plays an important role in several contributions to this volume (cf. the chapters by Hesse, Nold, Göbel and Papenberg). A closer look at this model shows that there remains a number of unanswered questions which need further research. In how far does Bennett's worldview of stages which have to be traversed, from ethnocentrism to ethno-relativism, pre-suppose that this is universal? In Bennett, Bennett and Allen (2003: 246), it is claimed that

> "The model is developmental because it assumes that issues at each stage need to be resolved in some way before the learner can move on to deal with more complex issues at later stages."

But at what age and in which learning context does the model begin? Who are the learners involved? Students or younger pupils? What about learners with a migration background, or with a bilingual or plurilingual background? In how far is the attitude towards cultural difference dependent on what kind of cultural difference is involved? (cf. Hesse in this volume) In how far is a strong differentiation relevant? (cf. Barrett in this volume) There is in addition to these basic questions the decisive question concerning what kind of experiences, insights or cognitive gains under what conditions lead to a change in attitudes. Further research is also urgently needed here in order to describe differentiated and context dependent learning processes (cf. Bechtel in this volume).

Another central question in the context of developmental models of intercultural competences concerns the normative premises inherent in the models themselves (cf. Byram in this volume). To what extent are we dealing with a normative term which rules out the possibility of confrontations, aversions and breaching of rules? How are undesired learning effects dealt with? To what extent are even the implicit moral norms culturally specific? In this regard, future work carried out in cooperation with researchers from different parts of the world is of great significance in order to relativise (euro-centric or western) norms, not least in the models with universal claims.

The research agenda is in other words still open to development, but we hope that this volume has clarified the questions even if the answers are still tantalisingly distant.

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Adelheid Hu and Michael Byram

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Konzeptuelle Fragen und theoretische Modellierungen

Conceptual issues and theoretical models

Mike Fleming

The challenge of 'competence'

This chapter examines some of the confusions associated with the use of 'competence' particularly with reference to the challenges and difficulties posed by the assessment of intercultural competence. It is helpful to distinguish between broad and narrow uses of the term. A holistic concept of intercultural competence is not easy to assess but it should not be jettisoned too readily in favour of narrow constructs just for pragmatic reasons. Negotiation of meaning and interprettation in context are important when creating an assessment scheme which therefore has more in common with creating a culture than with inventing a mathematical formula. Tolerance of ambiguity and criticality, which are key aspects of intercultural competence, need to be brought to bear also on the development and evaluation of assessment schemes.

1   Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to examine some of the confusions associated with the use of the term 'competence' particularly with reference to the challenges and difficulties posed by the assessment of intercultural competence. The chapter draws on two previous publications which addressed the use of competence in the context of literature teaching (Fleming 2007) and language teaching (Fleming, in press a) but here the debate is widened and the focus is more specifically on the implications for the use of the concept in the context of intercultural assessment. Some of the issues are common to the different fields: the movement from general to specific uses of the term, the inadvertent slide from one use to another, the tendency towards behavioural and reductive accounts in the pursuit of clarity. However, the challenge posed by the word 'competence' in the context of intercultural assessment is more pressing because here the term goes beyond aspects of skill and performance, embracing deeper notions of disposition, intention, motive and personal identity.

The primary purpose of the chapter then is to alert readers to potential problems arising from uses of the term 'competence' and other seemingly transparent words such as 'performance', 'behaviour' and even 'assessment' itself. What is needed is an explication of use and consequences of use rather than prescriptive definitions of terms. Too much writing on competence is focused on arriving prematurely at perspicuity by providing definitive

schemes and definitions. Such writing is often preoccupied with having the last word instead of engaging in exploratory dialogue. Underlying such approaches is a representational view of language and meaning where context and nuances of meaning in use are ignored in favour of fixed definitions. The quest for precision and clarity is understandable and is frequently found as an aspiration in the literature. However the price paid for such clarity is often oversimplification. This chapter will argue that important underlying questions can easily be concealed by rushing to definitions, that deeply entrenched ways of thinking about assessment and competence can inhibit progress in assessment, that problems which are conceived primarily as epistemological are more fruitfully seen as practical, and that questions which are seen as primarily conceptual need to be seen as having an ethical dimension.

2   The Competence Debate

The use of the term 'competence' has been growing steadily in the last thirty or so years and has been prominent in a number of fields including vocational training (Burke ed. 1989), medical education (Albanese et al 2008; Govaerts 2008), human resource management (Moore et al 2002; Armstrong 1995) and more generally in educational contexts. The term tends to be viewed positively or negatively in different contexts. In many countries in Europe the term 'competence' in an educational context has positive connotations as it signals a move away from a traditional curriculum dominated by content or narrow conceptions of propositional knowledge towards a richer conception of learning which includes reference to what people 'can do'. The conception of competence in many educational contexts is broad, embracing knowledge, skills and attitudes. The OECD (2005) definition recognised that competence 'involves the ability to meet complex demands, by drawing on and mobilising psychosocial resources (including skills and attitudes) in a particular context'. In the USA and in the UK the competence movement had its origins in vocational training and in that context the narrower use of the term 'competence' has been rather more controversial and subject to extensive criticism. The attempt to extend the use of competences to higher education has met with resistance (Barnett 1994; Halliday 2004). In order to gain more insight into the challenges posed by the use of the term in the context of intercultural assessment, it will be helpful to examine why the competence movement in general came to prominence and to uncover some of the key issues underlying the criticisms.

What then were the reasons for the movement towards competence frameworks, particularly in the context of vocational training? As with other reforms, a more balanced evaluation of purpose and intention can be achieved by comparison with what went before rather than just from a contemporary perspective informed by hindsight. Some of the background to

the rise of the competence movement in the UK can be found in Hodkinson and Issit (eds.) (1995) and Tuxworth (1989). The latter's brief historical survey points to origins in teacher education in the US where the movement was towards Performance Based Education.

The word 'performance' signals the key intention in the use of the word 'competence', away from a primary focus on inputs and course content towards the concrete outputs of the training or education process in terms of what people could do. It was thus in part a reforming, progressive movement which was thought to have brought a number of advantages. By focusing on outputs, it directed attention to the purpose of particular courses and qualifications, instead of simply attending to content. After all, it mattered less whether a plumber, teacher or doctor had taken a particular course but rather more whether they could, as a result, do the job effectively. Making the outcomes explicit meant that these could be separated from the training course actually undertaken. The benefits of this were thought to be clear. At a superficial level it brought more efficiency because course attendance was not always necessary as long as an individual could display the necessary competences and this opened up flexible routes and training processes. More significantly, the move towards specifying outcomes coincided with an increasing desire to enhance mobility with a less parochial approach to education and training and recognition of qualifications across various kinds of borders; the competence movement provided opportunities to evolve national and international standards. The process of formulating standards in the form of competence statements provided a focus for accountability and active involvement from a professional community in their development; statements of competence were to come not from an examination of training courses but from an analysis of employment requirements.

There were also intended advantages for the learner. From their perspective, being told the assessment outcomes in advance would offer welcome transparency and remove some of the mystery in the assessment process. Learners would be less vulnerable to the whim of assessors as the competences would provide an objective reference point for assessment. The competence movement thus has parallels in the more general move in education towards specifying objectives and creating 'constructive alignment' between objectives, course content and assessment processes (Biggs/Tang 2007).

Although the competence movement had its origins in vocational training, its exponents argued that competence statements could be developed for all learning outcomes (Jessup 1991) and the potential advantages of the move towards competence frameworks, as argued by its advocates, were thought to be considerable. It offered the promise of making education and training programmes more transparent, accountable, transferable and democratic (Burke ed. 1989). It offered the further benefits of motivating learners (Barrat-Hugh 1995: 1).

Why then has the movement been subject to such hostile criticism? And why is it that, when a key aim was to create more transparency and clarity, so many writers make reference to the confusion associated with the term? Hodkinson and Issit refer to the 'the deceptively simple concept of competence'. Eraut (1998: 127) made reference to the diverse usage of 'competence'. Velde (1999: 430) pointed out the 'considerable confusion' associated with the concept. Ashworth and Saxton (1990: 439) drew attention to the lack of clarity associated with the term. Albanese et al (2008: 248) thought that 'describing the defining criteria for what constitutes a competence' would 'represent an essential step towards clearing the confusion that reigns'.

In reviewing some of the main criticisms of the move towards competence, the intention is not simply to adjudicate on the different arguments and try to resolve differences but rather to look below the surface debates to determine some of the underlying issues. This is in keeping with the overall aim of this review which is to illuminate discussion of the challenges posed by 'competence' in intercultural assessment.

One of the major criticisms advanced against the use of competence is that descriptions of competence are inevitably reductive because they focus on mechanical performances or actions, without taking note of the importance of understanding. Barnett (1994: 75) argued that 'ideas of competences, outcomes, performance and activities sit uneasily with understanding' and the 'neglect of the concept of understanding' in the vocational movement led to an 'impoverished view of human action'. Ashworth and Saxton (1990: 10) felt that competences did not take account of 'mental capacity'. Lum (2004: 489) referred to the missing components as, 'the understandings, the capacities for judgment, imagination, problem-solving and the host of other propensities and proficiencies' that are vital for competent action. Hyland (1994: 74) took the view that 'the obsession with evidence in competence assessment served to restrict the discussion of the place of knowledge and understanding'. Halliday (2004: 77) argued that 'competence in the workplace involves tacit knowledge and wide-ranging understandings that are not amenable to precise specification'.

It is widely recognised that some of the early formulations of vocational competences were indeed somewhat crude and tended to break performance down into too many atomised statements (Mansfield, 1989: 33). However, writers were quick to deflect accusations of reductionism, embracing broader definitions of competence to resist the criticism that understanding was being ignored. Jessup (1991: 9) for example referred to 'the requirement for knowledge and understanding which underpin competence'. Wolf (1989: 41) was clear that 'we can actually agree that knowledge and understanding contribute to competence'. Debling (1989: 80) saw competence as 'a broad concept which involves the ability to transfer skills and knowledge to new situations and knowledge' and that 'in the context of competence based standards, knowledge and understanding have a key place' (ibid: 87).