

## An analytical study: Understanding and realization towards the notion of intercultural communicative competence

Arshad Saleem<sup>1</sup>Amber Nasreen Anjum<sup>2</sup>

Received: 11/09/2019

Accepted: 22/10/2019

Online Published: 28/10/2019

### Abstract

The ever-expanding concept of globalization is becoming a part of our routine working and living so the profession of teaching is also not remained untouched by its effects. “Intercultural and plurilingualismen-counters” (Bastos & Sá, 2014) are getting common and bringing challenges with them. In this very scenario it’s becoming essential to give way to the development of Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC). The concept is very much facilitating in the field of second language teaching. In this thematic study the following concerns will be analyzed: (a) how much the background studies support this concept; (b) to what extent it is important to spread awareness about it; and (c) what is the status of awareness of ICC in Pakistani academia. The findings of the analyses ensured us about the dire need of ICC awareness amongst language teachers and moreover its practical aspects for the improvement of SLT practices at all levels.

**Keywords:** Intercultural Communicative Competence, Linguistic and Cultural Diversity, Language and Culture

**JEL Classification:** M14, Z1, Z23

### 1. Introduction

#### Two happenings from the year 2004:

*During teaching language in second year’s class of college students at an institute of higher education recognized from HEC in Karachi this event was experienced. It was a combined class of two sections and around more than 40 students were sitting in the class. There was a Pakistani catholic boy named Ghori who recently joined the college about 6 weeks ago after his school education completed in abroad. He was a bit disliked by some of the faculty members and classmates due to his extra ordinary open communication which was not compatible with Pakistani culture. He was open to discuss in friends about his drinking habit and girlfriends. Due to his flamboyant personality he used to comment on staff and faculty in hallways which was not appropriate here particularly to commenting on teachers and ladies. I never felt anything bad in him and always gave him due respect and attention as my student he was very intelligent and an outstanding student. That particular day during the course of class interaction he raised his hand and asked my permission to say something which I accepted and allowed him. He walked straight towards me and came in front of the class on rostrum and said that he wants to confess something about me, I allowed he stated that he felt happy whenever*

<sup>1</sup> Dr., Shaheed Benazir Bhutto University-Shaheed Benazirabad

<sup>2</sup> Shaheed Benazir Bhutto University-Shaheed Benazirabad, ejazamber989@gmail.com

*he had any type of interaction with me because in that interaction my attitude and behavior never let him feel that he is not one of us and he is different he offered me his hand chain in courtesy and bowed his head in respect and again mentioned that he never seen a touch of hatred and disrespectfulness in my eyes for him as in others at the same place. I appreciated his confession and he sat back to his seat.*

*Another day at the same college I was sitting in faculty room with colleagues having a tea break and that day was a birthday of one of my colleagues named Mayra (an Urdu language teacher). The same boy Ghor entered in the faculty room and offered handshake to that lady to wish her birthday with high sense of courtesy. The lady being traditional scolded him that how dare he was to offer a handshake with her. He got out of the room quietly but had left a big question mark behind which was imprinted on my mind.*

These two occurrences really triggered this research to have a real understanding and importance of ICC that whenever we have differences amongst us as members of cosmopolitan society we have to see those differences not with subjective dis-likeness but objectively and neutrally and moreover accepting the diversity is crucial to be learnt and practiced.

Learning second language or foreign language is not only understanding some grammar rules and words but the underneath meanings of the words in context. No language can be studied without its context. Words lost their meanings when the context is changed. This is widely acceptable that language has its context so that it should be taught and read within that particular socio-cultural domain. And understanding at this level demands so many things to be incorporated in second language teaching. This has been being observed from the last century that there was always a question about contextual understanding of the second language; but it got boost in the 21<sup>st</sup> century with the heightened fame of communicative language teaching. This method requires constant communication in the classroom; which leads towards social interaction and responsibility; and social interaction gives birth to the reaction always. This reaction may be positive and negative in a sense if it is a feedback of understanding the communication in the right context it is positive but on the other hand if it is failed in developing that understanding in other cultural context it becomes negative and create misunderstanding and differences.

In this critical evaluation on the subject of Intercultural Communicative Competence around twenty studies are carefully evaluated so that we can find the answer of these research questions:

1. Do the studies support the notion of ICC? (Thematic Code A)
2. To what extent studies support ICC to assist the second language teaching and learning? (Thematic Code B)
3. What is the status of ICC awareness and practice in Pakistan in the field of second language teaching and learning? (Thematic Code C)

## **2. Literature Review**

It is highly useful to incorporate the approach of ICC in language teaching and academia to produce responsible citizens to play their part in the multicultural environment of the world (Byram, 2009) (B1). Today the most significant methodology which is used in the language

teaching classrooms is the communicative language teaching. This methodology is the most accepted framework across the globe in order to make the communicative competence higher in language learners. (Martínez-Flor, 2008) (B2). The understanding by which a second language teaching incorporates intercultural scopes has introduced in recent decades, (Magos & Simopoulos, 2009) (A2). The capability to work efficiently in multicultural environment or dealing with diversity is called culture intelligence—CQ and it has been the focal concern of researchers because it is directly connected with ‘globalization’, ‘international management’ and ‘workforce diversification’ and till date research is evident that CQ foresees its multiple impacts on intercultural context which may include, ‘cultural adaptation, expatriate performance, global leadership, intercultural negotiation, and multicultural team processes’ (Ang et al, 2011) (A1). Celeste & David (2006) studied regarding intercultural sensitivity found the differences between the concept of Hong Kong’s government, which is ‘cosmopolitanism’ and on the ground or factual situation in educational institutes and they endorsed the need for professional development of the notion amongst teachers (A3). Mendenhall & Oddou (1985) reviewed that cross-cultural fixing of emigrant managers requires expertise in four areas which are self-based, other-based, perceptual understanding and cultural strength (A4).

In today’s world language learning is not merely a task of understanding an object based on academic study, but it requires an intensive understanding regarding the means of communication; and the real concept of communication and its framework can never be drawn out of context (Robatjazi, 2008) (B3). Consequently, nowadays ever increasing recognition that language learning and understanding about target cultures can never realistically be parted (Kramsch, 1993; Valdes 1986) (B4). Eventually communicative competence is distributed into the multiple aspects of grammar, sociolinguistic, strategic competences and discourse (Canale & Swain, 1980), but still, it’s a general term and seems inadequate unless it is not attended with intercultural competences, a notion which is widely used in social psychological studies of communication (Wiseman & Koester, 1993) (B5). The teaching based on communicative methodology of language learning tells the rise of communicative Approaches to L2 teaching in the recent years, whose aim is to grow communicative competence in learners, i.e., the skill of using linguistic system in an effective and appropriate way. Though, the application of a communicative methodology is not an easy task. It signifies a challenge to linguists since it demands a consideration of the complex nature of the concept of competence which also involves cultural understanding. (Celce-Murcia and Olshtain, 2005) (B6). If we study the term Language competence it is further divided into two areas: organizational and pragmatic competence.

Organizational competence is about grammar and word-based/textual competence. And pragmatic competence comprises illocutionary and sociolinguistic competence, the previously considered as the knowledge of speech acts and functions of language and the latter stating and referring to the knowledge of the contextualized use of the language. This division of two sub-competencies can be drawn from Leech’s (1983: 10-11) and Thomas’s (1983: 99) (B7). At the world level holistically the issue of linguistic diversity needs to be viewed in the context of the other multiple types of diversity which can be seen in societies, probably they are ethnic, religious, social class diversity and moreover territorial diversity. In different geographical and

political environments, these are formed and shaped in different manners, depending on the decisions made by national, regional or local authorities. Consideration of these different kinds of diversity is crucial to an understanding of most cultures and their languages (Becker, 1995) (A5). Josefsson and Aronsson (2018) studied, particularly to prove the fallacy that on soft skills such as cultural understanding has nothings to help in professional academic programs. He concluded in his study for engineering professionals that the training and development regarding cultural understanding helped out of the way to professional students and gave more smooth way to collaborative lab or project working (B8). Another important study (Newton et al., 2010) shares the fact that if cultural understanding becomes the part of the language teaching and learning it can assist to understand one's own culture on which we don't put too much attention which in usual language teaching and learning routine (C1). A case study in Pakistani context showed that where there is a need of globally connected and facilitating international universities there is a gap of intercultural competence for those students who come to learn from other cultures and face difficulty in getting adjustment with host culture( Janjua et al., 2011) (C2).

A framework for comprehensive foreign language learning aims is proposed by Van Ek (1986) (A6), which developed the view that the second language learning or foreign language learning must be acceptable or true through its impact on learners' overall education. He focused that SLL and FLL is not only concerned with training in communication skills, but also with the individual and social growth of the language learner as an individual. Based on this view his framework specifies orientation to 'social competence' and 'social responsibility', which are drawn in the original definition of communicative competence.

As Byram, (1997) (A7) cited Van Ek's communicative ability model (1986) comprises six competences, combined with autonomy and social responsibility. He accorded six components around the globe with a vision that each aspect is the central and the rest are connected with it the relationship to the aspectis also be in view. The model's components look like as:

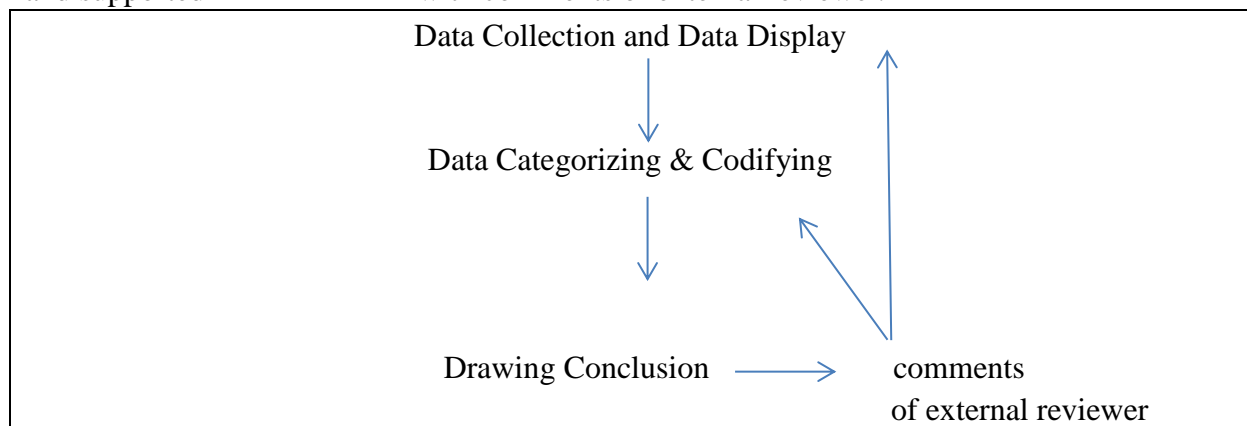
- Linguistic competence (A7a): producing and interpreting meaning full occurrences.
- Sociolinguistic competence (A7b): the knowledge of the choice of language to use in the context of relationship.
- Discourse competence (A7c): the ability of having strategy befitting in the construction and interpretation of texts.
- Strategic competence (A7d): communication in difficult situations, to let the meanings get across.
- Socio-cultural competence (A7e): languages are differently framed in social and cultural context. Culture is always a reference in understanding words and their meanings.
- Social competence (A7f): depends on both the willingness and skillfulness to interact with others.

### **3. Methodology**

This paper is based on the qualitative data analyses of more than 20 relevant thematic studies on the idea of intercultural communicative competence; the process leads the discussion towards more refined concept of ICC needs and development and the evaluation of its practice in Pakistan. In the qualitative research, the most essential aspect is to have the point of saturation

to determine the number of cases (Faizan, Haque, Cockrill & Aston, 2019; Haque et al., 2018; Haque & Oino, 2019). Following the same strategy, we employed the thematic framework while ensuring the saturation point is attained three repetitive responses after minimum 10 cases). The method best suits to analyze the data in primary qualitative research studies. The discussion made here is categorized in codes as recommended by Alhojailan (2012). This paper reports that to what extent the concept of ICC had been discussed in early studies (thematic code A), and how much ICC is important in language teaching and learning (thematic code B). Moreover, the paper also reviews the status of ICC awareness and practice in Pakistan (thematic code C). Thematic analyses model for this paper is taken from Miles & Huberman (1994). The model used in this study shows three main streams of the process i. e. data collection, data reviewing then categorizing codifying themes and at last drawing conclusion which is linked with data collection and codified themes. Finally, external reviewer's comment to be added. Following figure shows the flow of the process precisely.

Stream 1 —————> Data collection & Reviewing  
 Stream 2 —————> Categorizing & Codifying  
 Stream 3 —————> Drawing conclusion which shows relation with Stream 1 & 2 and supported with comments of external reviewer.



## 4. Analysis

### 4.1. Data Categorizing and Tabulation for Thematic Code A

S. No	Authors	Themes	Thematic Codes
1	Ang et al (2011) Becker (1995)	Importance	A1, A5
2	Magos & Simopoulos (2009)	Emergence	A2
3	Celeste & David (2006) Mendenhall & Oddou (1985)	Need	A3, A4
4	Van Ek (1986) Byram (1997)	Societal concern	A6, A7e
5	Byram (1997)	Competences' levels	A7, A7a, A7b, A7cA7d, A7e, A7f.

**Discussion on thematic code A:**

Literature review for Code A answers the first concern in this study that how much background studies support the notion of ICC. The research provides a well-structured awareness and support to the notion of ICC. The analyses did not only support it but also came up with multiple dimensions of the knowledge. These thematic dimensions are codified for the ease of the discussion. The most important aspect which is considered seriously is the importance (A1) of understanding ICC (Ang et al., 2011; Becker, 1995). Its importance is felt for its scope and the effectiveness. 21<sup>st</sup> century is going to see a mixed races predicament both in business and social context this seems obvious to grow ICC concept to deal with the cultural hindrances. This is a macro level to see ICC in global context but micro levels on regional bases can also be observed. Pakistan has a wide range of cultural differences and every culture in itself has a complete identity and norms. This is highly important to develop understanding of multicultural interaction through academics to let the new troops of youth be ready for such mixed environment around and the level of respect for each other should be kept maintained.(A2) Looking 30 years back or more it was a limited concept.

Today, (Magos & Simopoulos, 2009) intercultural communicative competence has led the studies toward understanding and shaping the dimensions of 'Cultural Intelligence' CQ which is getting focused by researches around the world. Ang et al. (2011) wrote that there are two types of knowledge about cultures; (1) cultural in general context and (2) culture in specific context. Knowledge about the general context of the culture is important as it gives way to understanding the similarities and difference between the cultures and there it develops a mental approach in those who bear this knowledge. They are better communicator and can play and act smartly and even wisely in cases where the differences occur, and situation demands understanding. As the case of 'Ghori' is referred a simple description was required for not to allow him for the hand shake instead of anger and dis-likeness Here lies the very need ICC to be grown up in behaviors and attitudes (A3, A4).Valdes (1986) mentioned that language and culture can never be separated and the very idea later on is followed by Kramchsh (1993).

Every logical reason tells that language is associated with its culture and social context. Many experiments were made to study the impact of environment and culture on the language they all proved to be true. The scholars have shown the emphasis that the complete understanding of second language can only be developed when it is exposed to the contextual understanding of the meanings. This is most crucial in a sense that it develops tolerance level and eliminates differences amongst people. In the age of speedy communication, collaboration and coordination it plays leading role in every area of life to promote the relationship both professional and personal (A6, A7). And for this very purpose what can be foresee the focus should be on accepting the diversity as a citizen of global village. There should be both tolerance and respect for each other's specific life context, and this understanding will better lead towards the collaborative efforts to prosper and progress faster at any level (A7a, A7b, A7c A7d, A7e, and A7f). Celce-Murcia & Olshain, (2005) presented the two divisions of communicative competence which put stress on ICC notion. According to them there are two levels of competence: organizational and pragmatic, when we look at organizational competence it's an understanding of grammatical knowledge and words or text based meanings (A7a, A7c, A7d),

but on other side when we try to comprehend pragmatic competence (A7b, A7e, A7f) we see that it can never be possible without the proper understanding of sociolinguistic parameters.

And sociolinguistics is highly dependent on cultural understanding (A7e, A7f) of any language and its background in that particular context. Intercultural communicative competence is obvious since it is required to be the master of real understanding of the utterances. Another very worth mentioning term of ‘sojourner’ is used by Byram (1997), for the language learners, which is truly a well matched concept. This idea stresses on the importance of intercultural communicative competence (A7e) and that what SLT and FLT contributes to the understanding amongst students about the notion of otherness (A7a). In this stream of thought we draw out its importance and need in today’s SLT concept A7a) which leads us towards the discussion on the second concern of this study.

#### 4.2. Data Categorizing and Tabulation for Thematic Code B

S. No	Authors	Themes	Thematic Codes
1	Byram (1997)	Usefulness	B1
2	Martínez-Flor (2008)	Communicative classrooms	B2
3	Robotjazi (2008)	Contextual understanding	B3, B4
4	Wiseman & Koester (1993) Celce-Murcia and Olshtain (2005)	Holistic concept of competence	B5, B6, B7
5	Josefsson and Aronsson (2018)	Language and professional studies	B8

#### Discussion on thematic code B:

Byram (1997) describes the success of having skills in intercultural communicative competence as if an individual is successful enough to building links, rapport or relationship while communicating the second language or foreign language of the other member; negotiating or exchanging how to communicate successfully so that both members communicative requirements are answered; facilitating talks or discussions between diverse cultural circumstances; and continuing to acquire or enhance communicative abilities in foreign languages not yet considered to study. These stated characteristic focuses that an effective intercultural communicator studies to intermingle with effective interaction with those from a another culture, a base of language and culture learning has been constructed, and that individuals are more likely to carry on to collect linguistic knowledge from other cultures to widen the range of intercultural communicative encounters (B1). Moeller and Nugent suggest that teachers should be well equipped and prepared to guiding students to reflect on their defined ideas and perceptions before going towards the studies of other cultures in the classroom (B1). The notion of self-awareness and identity transformation may only exist if learners are provided the chance to recognize where they begin. The idea of obtaining intercultural communicative competence (ICC) is based on about more than simple contacts of language rather it emphasis on making relationships and engaging in communication even

within the members who belong to two different worlds (B3,B4, B5, B6, B7, B8). Study supports the work of (Moeller & Nugent, 2014).

**Table 1:** Four major theories and factors that contribute to the development of intercultural communicative competence.

<b>Bennet's (1993) Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS)</b>	<b>Gudykunst's (1995) Anxiety/Uncertainty Management Model (AUM)</b>	<b>Byram's (1997) Multidimensional Model of Intercultural Competence</b>	<b>Deardorff's (2006) Process Model of Intercultural Competence</b>
Charts internal evolution from ethnocentrism to ethnorelativism	Focuses on self-awareness as the key component in building bridges to other cultures	Addresses the attitudes, knowledge, and skills needed to interact successfully in intercultural situations	Creates a continuous process of working on attitudes, knowledge, internal outcomes, and external outcomes related to intercultural competence

Built on the material provided in Byram's Model second or foreign language teachers must focus on rebuilding the methodology for language teaching and cultural awareness in the classroom if the aim is to create real intercultural competent speakers of the foreign language (B5, B6, B7). Traditionally existing methods for teaching foreign languages highlighted the importance of students' practicing of language structures, pronunciation and vocabulary in such a manner to make them native like speakers. Van Ek (cited in Byram, 1997) enlightens that focusing on making near native competent speakers in reality causes most learners' failure because they are required to be disconnect from their own art which is natural and they are supposed to agree on the fact that the native speaker embraces the power in the interaction encounters. This concept is a hindrance in growth toward intercultural competence, as the learner is not allowed with equal chances to come up with his/her opinions during the interaction. Rather language teachers should teach students using language which is based on the structures newly discovered about the "other" and themselves. The shift from teaching students to interact error free in order to endure a foreign culture to communicating flexibly to build relationships is based on the idea of ICC. So that learners can flourish in a foreign culture with a better understanding and rapport with the members of other society (B1).

When the teaching pedagogy of intercultural communicative competence based on models of mutual relationships in which students learns his/her role as a "social actor", they experience the mutual finding of another language and living, and language classrooms become a center where students and teachers consider values which can lead to promote democracy and tolerance (B5, B6, B7).The variety and multiplicity of definitions and descriptions of



intercultural competence come up with the multiple situations in which American society has led towards cross-cultural empathies. Intercultural communicative competence has now become a vital constituent as people interact more frequently with other countries' citizens. Therefore, intercultural competence, not only to inquire the understanding or speaking a foreign language, but Intercultural communicative competence, includes the ideas of self-awareness and analysis as fundamental tool to cope up with intercultural situation. (B5, B6, B7).

Song and Liu (2007) studied teachers perception about the ICC idea in Chinese context and inquired that how teachers perceive it in connection to ELT, and also that how they believe that it can be best raised and fostered through ELT, how their concepts and ideas are related and realized in their own teaching practices, and how they relate ICC teaching to the development of language learners etc. this study invites further research in its context to put more emphasize on the significance of ICC in language teaching (B2). In the due course of the study it is also found that language teaching with cultural understanding for professional studies also provides a better and productive professional interaction and collaborative working environment. Josefsson and Aronsson (2018) have provided a conclusion based on the engineering students' observation that after the better understanding of intercultural concept they become more interactive in labs and project working and the mutual interaction and understanding support them to be more professionally sound. This idea can be implemented on any professional program and language requirement. It can be true in the case pharmacists and doctors and others. The domain of business and management has also well-defined with the use and requirement of language in the shape of business communication both within and cross borders (B8). Dimitrov also promoted that cultural understanding amongst graduate students is vital as they navigate with their communication skills at intercultural workstations (B8).

#### **Data Categorizing and Tabulation for Thematic Code C:**

<b>S. No</b>	<b>Authors</b>	<b>Themes</b>	<b>Thematic Codes</b>
1	Newton et al. (2010)	Learners self-cultural awareness	C1
2	Janjua et al. (2011)	Answering adjustment problems	C2

#### **Discussion on thematic code C:**

The Ghori's case mentioned in the introduction reflected the lack of awareness about ICC in Pakistan's middle level academia where there is not common to have foreign students or faculty and the environment is not multicultural. The situation supports that the notion of ICC should be grown up in the minds well to understand their own culture its similarities and differences with others (Newton et al., 2010) (C1). Pakistan is a hub of numerous ethnic groups which speak their own distinct languages and live their own unique lifestyles. Pakistan's academia is in the dire need of self-awareness programs to spread the knowledge about one's own culture and then about others where there is potential to be mixed with and work and grow together. This awareness will lead then answering the problem of adjustment for individuals (C2). A Case study by Janjua et al (2011), presents comprehensive calculations that what types of problems are faced by the foreign students in International Islamic University, Islamabad, Pakistan (C2).

This study highlighted seven major areas where foreign students felt difficulties and adjustment issues i.e. assessment system, separate campuses for male and female students, library rules,

teaching and learning methodologies and moreover language issues. The study remained significant in showing an inclusive picture and strategic suggestion to answering the stated issues. The findings of the study focused on the fact that most of the respondents of the research stated that they were sent here without any briefing about IIU and its academic system. The solution suggested is only spreading awareness regarding differences and similarities between cultures and from Pakistani academia some strategic approach has to be developed to cope up with such problematic situations.

## 6. Conclusion

Developing the understanding about intercultural communicative competence is the notion which requires to be focused in ever growing communication across borders. The study endorsed that in order to prepare language learners for success in an interconnected global village, intercultural competence must play an integral part of the L2 curriculum. Researchers have recognized that the idea of identity transformation, student as inquirer, and process, characterize an ICC classroom, which can help ELTs in creating learning tasks that will lead students toward intercultural competence. Being an integral part of the language classrooms ICC provides learners an experience that how to properly use language to build relationships and empathies with members of other cultures and societies. They can evaluate their own beliefs and practices through negotiating points of view varied from their own and get an insider's perspective of another culture.

The discussion presented in this paper showed a variety of approaches to teaching and assessing intercultural competence based on recognizing frameworks of Teaching L2 and interculturality. By including such activities in the foreign language curriculum, students begin to see how their attitudes, knowledge, and language skills can affect their intercultural experiences. As outcome, students will receive an understanding of how to enter into intercultural situations with open mindedness, resulting not only in more successful communication, but in building expressive relationships with target language speakers.

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