Intercultural Communication Dialectics in English Language Teaching

Hamza R'boul[1a]

Abstract

Conceptualizations of intercultural communication in English language teaching have largely been constructed on westerncentric and essentialist representations of interculturality. The failure to take into account power imbalances among Anglophone and Southern spaces may perpetuate the inequalities that have long-existed. Questioning singularity of approaches in the intercultural language education is required to account for the complexity of intercultural interactions, especially in terms of power imbalances. The dialectic perspective, with its inclusiveness of varying discursive reasonings, can offer a discerning treatment of interculturality through reconciling the opposing dialectics in intercultural communication scholarship. This article (a) makes a case for the usefulness of incorporating multiple epistemological stances in order to develop more comprehensive insights about interculturality, (b) argues that, by developing pluriversal perspectives, we can simultaneously consider the multiplicity of individuals' ontologies, identities, and cultures. This is realized by first advancing an inter-paradigmatic discussion of culture-communication research dialectics and then considering its theoretical relevance and practical applications in English language teaching.

[1] PhD Candidate, Email: hamzarboul4@gmail.com
  Tel: +21-260-4991069
[a] Public University of Navarre, Spain

1. Introduction

Intercultural education in English language teaching (ELT) is necessarily an interdisciplinary domain that requires the construction of interculturally percipient frames of reference. Recent engagements with interculturality in the context of multicultural societies have promoted a critical consideration of other aspects that go beyond the linguistic dimension. Such assumptions have included different discursive reasonings since "our ideas and construction of difference and the other have come under increasing scrutiny" (Baker, 2015, p. 1). Various conceptual stances have been delivered to account for the complexity of intercultural encounters and to sufficiently meet the epistemological specificities of culture-communication dyadic relationships (e.g., Byram & Wagner, 2018; Deardorff, 2009; Dervin, 2016).

Given the multitude of approaches to culture-communication research, knowledge production in intercultural communication and culture pedagogy is bound up with multiple understandings only sometimes influenced by relative cross-paradigmatic pollination. A closer inspection of the current scholarship reveals different conceptualizations of interculturality, culture-language-communication caveats, and research methodologies. This paper's argumentation is underpinned by the dialectic inter/multi-perspectival approach, which seeks to reconcile contradictions and the exclusivity of each paradigm (models of intercultural language teaching in this case). This orientation is particularly prompted by the assumption that "human nature is probably both creative and deterministic; those research goals can be to predict, describe, and change; that the relationship between culture and communication is, most likely, both reciprocal and contested" (Martin & Nakayama, 1999, p. 13).

This paper aims to situate the discussion on intercultural education and English language teaching within the intersections of interculturality, power imbalances, and communication. This is realized by (a) making a case for the necessity of considering multiple epistemological stances assuming more well-rounded insights; (b) calling for the development of dialectical approach through emphasizing intellectual cross-pollination. The objective is that complementing perspectives that discuss interculturality with further interdisciplinary analytical reflection will yield a more profound coverage. These assumptions maintain that (a) the complexity of intercultural interactions can be potentially accounted for by including varied epistemological stances. Such action entails multi-disciplinary contributions and, thus, confirms the inclusion of the six intercultural communication dialectics proposed by Martin and Nakayama (1999, 2010, & 2015); (b) intercultural communication in English language teaching has been mainly concerned with the communicative aspect which fails to consider the sociopolitical realities and power imbalances that may result in unfair intercultural communicative experiences. A dialectical perspective can help to examine power hierarchies since it "foregrounds individual characteristics of competence with larger societal attitudes and laws" (Martin & Nakayama, 2015, p. 13).

By promoting the dialectical perspective, scholars can accommodate for intercultural-ELT scholarship's epistemological limits and make use of power imbalances in accounting for the complexity of intercultural interactions. The dialectic perspective with its underpinning theories is introduced first by elaborating on its principles and justifying the subsequent discussion. Then, a critical understanding of interculturality in English language teaching is put forward while supporting the advancement of pluriversal perspectives. The objective is to allow for a critical synergy that concurrently considers the complexities of both interculturality and human interaction through synergizing insights, perceptions, and ontologies delivered by various frameworks.

2. Dialectic Perspective to Studying Culture-Communication

The dialectic perspective supports synergizing and complementing different approaches in analyzing interculturality and language. It recognizes that there is a plausible need for interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approaches that better account for the interconnectedness and complexity of language and cultural conceptualizations. It considers that there are "distinct and

competing approaches to the study of culture and communication" (Martin & Nakayama, 1999, p. 1); this is particularly to be of an intellectual significance rather than of a problematic nature since it engages different approaches, perspective, and methods. Importantly, inter-paradigmatic collaboration is appropriately achieved by successfully melding together various complementary approaches. To clarify the rationale behind embracing intercultural communication dialectics and advancing pluriversal perspectives in English language teaching, it is necessary to examine the four distinct paradigms of culture-communication that have been delineated based on Burrell and Morgan's (1988) framework. These four paradigms characterize sociological research against the two dimensions of "the nature of social science and assumptions about the nature of society" (Martin & Nakayama, 1999, p. 2): functionalist, fnterpretive, critical humanist and critical structuralist.

Burrell and Morgan's (1988) framework is anchored in the epistemological differentialism of (a) objectivism, which separates subject (researcher) and object (knowledge). It consequently presumes the ability of the external world and human behavior to be objectively studied and scientifically verified using research methodology that adheres to subject-object separation; and (b) subjectivist opinion that not only gainsays the polarity of the subject-object but also stresses their relationship in productive tension; knowledge is subjective, and thus human behavior remains unpredictable, creative and unsystematic. It can be inferred accordingly that researchers do not entirely and/or solely abide by the conceptual and methodological assumptions embraced by a particular paradigm. Combining theoretical perceptions from different approaches is a common practice is social sciences since, realistically, no contemporary intercultural communication research is exclusively underpinned by a functionalist perspective.

It is more accurate to perceive the confines among the four paradigms as irregular and slightly pervious, rather than rigid. The willingness to take in the dialectical perspective stems from the possibility of realizing an integrative modus operandi in

accounting for the complexity of intercultural encounters. The aim is to synergize insights, strengths, research methods of multiple disciplines and paradigms to offer more dynamic thinking, a greater analytical depth, and a well-rounded analysis of various aspects involved in intercultural interactions in ELT. This cannot be merely achieved through a haphazard collection of information but through an evaluation of knowledge production and scholarship that is aligned with the current circumstances and the non-linearity of intercultural encounters. Notions of 'Interparadigmatic dialogue' and 'Paradigmatic collaboration' are, as well, of a worthwhile contribution to this discussion.

3. Intercultural Communication Dialectics

The diversity of research approaches and cultural conceptualizations in intercultural communication should be preferably perceived as highly advantageous in (a) making sense of the intercultural and (b) reaching a heuristic analysis of culture and communication rather than a problematic ecology of knowledge production about interculturality. A profound understanding of different paradigmatic perspectives is a precursor to alleviate scholarly debates. This is particularly relevant here because a lucid consideration of both strengths and limitations of each approach may eschew the academic division, promote interparadigmatic dialogue and encourage multi-paradigmatic collaboration. Considering the distinct paradigms of culture-communication research, Martin and Nakayama (1999; 2010) advanced four positions that propose ways of handling the different perspectives of going about the intercultural.

First, liberal pluralism insists on synergizing insights from different positions. It sees the specific contribution of each paradigmatic perspective to our understanding of culture and communication, and thus it admits the scientific significance of all paradigms in doing research. However, it fails to logically align ideas of one paradigm to another so that scholars would make use of them to progress their research. Second, interparadigmatic borrowing recognizes possible complementary contributions among paradigms and "integrate some concerns or issues into their own

research" (Martin & Nakayama, 1999, p. 11). Third, multiparadigmatic collaboration holds research paradigms to be incomprehensive and limits scholars' horizons. It procures researchers to simultaneously consider different paradigms and emphasizes the equal value of all paradigms in collectively contributing to the culture-communication research.

Fourth and highly relevant to this paper's discussion is the dialectic perspective, whose primary objective is to harmonize contradictions and the particularities of each paradigm. In the context of intercultural communication, it seeks to enable researchers to better recognize different ways of handling knowledge production in an inclusive fashion; therefore, there is "the possibility of engaging multiple, but distinct, research paradigms … to see the world in multiple ways and to become better prepared to engage in intercultural interaction" (Martin & Nakayama, 1999, p. 13). This, in turn, accentuates the nature of knowledge production about intercultural interactions as a continuously changeable and dynamic process since it repudiates considerations of knowledge through the lenses of fixed-positivist and disjunct perspectives. Similar positions encourage scholars to knowingly endorse the dynamism of culture. Dervin's (2016) perception of interculturality (the co-construction of identity and culture during the interaction) and Byram's (1997, 2018) model of ICC (comprising attitudes, knowledge, and skills) may be viewed as relatively dichotomous based on their principles; however, this is specifically relevant here because dialectic perspective encourages researchers to transcend these dichotomies. The interdependent and complementary aspects of the seeming opposites are recognized and accepted as ordinary. To facilitate interparadigmatic discussion and form alignments between differing approaches, Martin and Nakayama (1999) put forward a dialectical approach to scholarship elucidated by six dialectics of intercultural communication practice.

Cultural-Individual Dialectic: Intercultural communication is generally perceived to be both cultural and individual. In any interactive activity, some aspects of communication are individual and distinctive (e.g., characteristic linguistic behavior), while others are shared among people belonging to a particular cultural group. A dialectical perspective recognized interlocutors as being simultaneously individuals and cultural group members; hence, the research could be conducted to clarify how these contradictory characteristics interact and exist in intercultural encounters.

Personal/Social-Contextual Dialectic: A dialectical perspective underlines the interplay between personal and contextual communication. Some aspects of communication are continuously existent in a myriad of contexts, while others are exclusively contextual. For example, employers' and employees' 'communication is characterized by a specific pattern in the workplace that is constant, whereas they would communicate differently in other contexts (more casual), expressing different identities and aspects of themselves. A researcher could examine how these contradictory characteristics work in intercultural communicative activities.

Differences-Similarities Dialectic: There is a continuous debate about the significance of similarities and differences (these are often more emphasized, leading to solid expectations) in intercultural communication; that is why a dialectic approach first takes them both to be appreciably important in understanding and analyzing intercultural interactions (Most scholarship has been predicated upon the existence of a significant difference between cultural groups); second, it confirms that the co-existence(either in cooperation or opposition) of similarities and differences in intercultural contacts. Similarities and differences exist in terms of life experiences, language attitudes, and ways of communicating.

Static-Dynamic Dialectic: A common conception in cultural studies is either the static or the dynamic nature of culture. The perception of cultural traits as being both dynamic and static could largely ameliorate the scope of intercultural communication research and offer more perceptive insights.

Present-Future/History-Past Dialectic: The relationship between the past (it is always judged by the scopes of the present) and the present-future is dialectic. The dialectic approach emphasizes realizing analytic

equilibrium in approaching the past and the present.

Privilege-Disadvantage Dialectic: The final dialectic is perceived between the notions of privilege and disadvantage (socioeconomic, political, etc.); this is especially seen in individuals' tendency to communicate both/either privilege and/or disadvantage. The dialectic perspective affirms that social classes, power differentials, and hierarchies are not always well-delineated. This implies that communicators can be privileged or disadvantaged depending on the context; also, they can sometimes concurrently exhibit both of these characteristics.

The dialectical perspective is an important principle in pluriversal understanding (which is necessarily interdisciplinary) of intercultural encounters. By adopting a dialectical perspective (commonly opposed to rhetoric), researchers and scholars can transcend any perfunctory treatment of intercultural interactions that is insensitive to current sociopolitical realities. A comprehensive analysis of any intercultural communicative activity cannot be assumed by exclusively adhering to the investigation of one aspect of the interaction. Dialectic perspective stresses the relational rather than individual aspects of intercultural encounters as well as applying one research paradigm.

All the prominent approaches involve either explicitly or implicitly one or several dialectics mentioned above. The aim is to advance a pluriversal understanding of the intercultural that is informed by the necessity of expanding common assumptions of interculturality in English language teaching that are often pragmatic and only discusses the communicative aspects without examining how power asymmetries influence of how intercultural interactions are handled. A pluriversal understanding emphasizes synergizing intellectual insights from different perceptions of interculturality in order to achieve a perception of even the underrepresented contexts. It is rather promising in the sense that it can contribute to a broader range of comprehensiveness and move towards an inclusive building up of the intercultural.

A positive perspective of intercultural communication comes from Bakhtin's (1981) work on the dialogue of cultures and intersubjectivity, which emphasizes that intercultural contact is fundamental to cultural awareness. Dialogue is not only a matter of linguistic exchange but also a process of self-disclosure and realization as it allows for truth-finding about oneself (Bakhtin, 1981). Intercultural dialogue would help communicators develop a deeper level of self-consciousness; interlocutors would have a closer inspection of their own beliefs and practices as they are compared to those of others (Bakhtin, 1984, 1990). Therefore, learning another culture is likely to enrich one's culture rather than replacing it (Bakhtin, 1986).

4. Power Imbalances in Intercultural Communication

Critical reviews of intercultural communication in English language teaching, especially in the field of teaching English as a second or foreign language, have maintained that there are some dynamics beyond communication that have not been discussed and/or analyzed profoundly (R'boul, 2020a). These dynamics include (a) the need of developing a more in-depth analysis of identities (Mendoza, Halualani, & Drzewiecka, 2002), (b) intercultural communication research has to address the spread and localization of less-studied cultures since intercultural communication is currently highly United States and East-Asian centric (Croucher, Sommier, & Rahmani, 2015). Also, it has been found that "some areas of research that are underrepresented …" and one of them is "what is the role of IC in understanding/easing prejudices propagated by key global events?" (Arasaratnam, 2015, p. 303). This can make a case for the necessity of considering four junctures that have retheorized culture and communication from a critical intercultural communication perspective (Halualani, Mendoza, & Drzewiecka, 2009), especially the third juncture Culture as a 'Site of Struggle' that critiques and highlights power relations and ideology in intercultural Communication which is particularly pertinent to this paper's discussion.

The field of intercultural communication may often be mainly concerned with the actual practices of communication through conducting a cultural analysis of discourses, not the implicit rituals of homogenizing communicative/behavioral norms through western-centric processes (Abid & Moalla, 2020). There are some ready-made assumptions that "seem to reinscribe the colonialist traveler/cosmopolitan – focusing on individual characteristics, motivation, and skill sets, often through a Eurocentric lens" (Martin & Nakayama, 2015, p. 13). Failure to account for power issues and hierarchies that are closely related to interculturality delivers a distorted understanding of dynamics involved in intercultural interactions. This is apparent in current conflicts around the world that seem to be chiefly caused by a lack of intercultural understanding and an awareness of how power imbalances and sociopolitical conditions are highly influential (e.g., US and Iran political conflict, etc.).

Continuing to reaffirm similar stances in English language education would aggravate the current situations. Students from southern contexts are likely to feel inferior (R'boul, 2020b) and, thus, seek other approaches to exhibit their value even at the expense of achieving the purpose of communicative activity. On the other hand, native speakers and individuals from northern spaces are likely to reproduce a pre-conceived sense of superiority, which will precipitate cultural contestation or possibly assimilation on the part of non-native/non-western individuals (R'boul, 2021). An instance of this intercultural communicative judgment can be seen in perceiving East-Asian students to be lacking critical thinking and self-reliance due to sociocultural influences (Jocelyn, Constanza, Christine, & Martin, 2019), including 'collectivist' and 'Confucian cultures' (DeWaelsche, 2015; Zhao & Coombs, 2012) resulting in patronizing cultural relativism (Holliday & Macdonald, 2020, p. 623).

Other alternative approaches that support social justice and equal appreciation of all individuals include communication activism pedagogy (Frey & Palmer, 2014) and politically responsive constructionist theory (Deetz & Simpson, 2004). Such models can engage both scholars and instructors in "discussing the intersections of critical communication pedagogy and intercultural communication education" (Sobre, 2017, p. 40) within the context of ELT and thus accentuating these students' inability to sustain interaction in communicative classroom (Littlewood, 2007). Importantly, the field of intercultural communication is dominated by Northern knowledge and epistemologies (R'boul, 2020c). That is why it is becoming increasingly valid to request more attention by communication scholars and instructors to the wider socio-cultural conditions and discursive ideologies that emphasize power imbalances, superiority, inferiority, prejudice, and discrimination. Questioning the historical rituals and normative processes may re-structure the representation of interculturality in English language teaching into more critical balanced orientation leading to a less western and ethnocentric bias.

5. Pluriversal Perspectives in English Language Teaching

5.1. Epistemological Considerations

Since 'interculturality' implies "a plurality of perspectives about culture and identity, and it is this multiplicity of viewpoints and their intersections" (Tinghe, 2017, p. 309), corroborating pluriversal perspectives entails (a) weaving together prominent concepts from diverse but complementary disciplines and (b) transcending dominant perceptions of intercultural narratives that have been formulated in alignment with normative assumptions. This melding has to be guided by the dialectical approach in order to ascertain the systematic consideration of various perspectives. The aim is to move beyond the generalized frameworks that are not responsive to the current societal relations and interactional sense-making dynamics. The dialectic perspective to culture-communication undergirds the general orientation guiding this paper's argumentation that perceives how "academic discourses about intercultural education do not merely discover, describe and analyze intercultural communicative practices that already exist in an objective manner, but actively co-construct them" (Zotzmann, 2015, p. 371).

This represents an endeavor to reconcile the range of dialectics perceived in intercultural communication research; it is underpinned by the consideration of the current intercultural dialogue as a space of possible conflict among different epistemologies, ontologies, and ecologies (e.g., western/eastern, etc.) resulting in either cultural contestation or assimilation; ELT scholars are required to embrace/allow for a nuanced inter-disciplinarily informed approach to capture the complexity of intercultural communication at both the inter-societal-cultural and interpersonal levels. This assumption accentuates the importance of looking at particularities (cultural, individual and situational) and how they have crystallized the epistemological complexity of interculturality in circumstances characterized by non-linearity and non-recurrence of well-delineated patterns; and thus "more complex approaches to communication are required, focusing not exclusively on cultural differences, but rather on the sense-making processes used by individuals to co-construct meaning during an encounter" (Frame, 2014, p. 1).

By adopting context-sensitive understandings as a hermeneutic medium in representing intercultural communication in ELT, there is a possibility of delivering heuristic grounds for clarifying the complexity of both cultural and highly personalized identities. Pluriversal perspectives entail primarily striving towards more nuanced understandings of intercultural situations especially the ones that involve the use of the English language. An interdisciplinary theoretical approach, informed by dialectics of intercultural communication, can contribute to the scholarship through (a) emphasizing sensitivity to the role of culture in linguistic choices and perceptions, (b) the importance of considering personal identity/cultural trajectories (Nair-Venugopalal, 2009) and (c) examining the intercultural and its interrelations with education(Gorski, 2008; Palaiologou & Gorski, 2017), globalization (Cantle, 2012), political realities (Aman, 2018; Collins, 2018) and interculturalism/multiculturalism (Guilherme, 2019; Levey, 2012; Meer & Modood, 2012) in multicultural societies.

5.2. Pluriversal Perspectives

A preliminary procedure in contextualizing/ structuring the complexity of interculturality within an ELT framework necessitates critically simulating social realities while constructing both intercultural-oriented teaching materials/instructional decisions. I specifically emphasize pluriversality of perspectives as individuals' cultures/identities are in constant change and thus cannot be accurately imagined in any given moment due to the overwhelming number of influential factors. However, it is also important to consider "how language as a subsystem of culture transformatively interacts with cognition and how cognition at a cultural level is manifested in language" (Sharifian, 2011, p. 1). It is clear that "recent conceptualisations of IC, like Barrett, Byram, Lázár, Mompoint-Gaillard, and Philippou's (2013), echo the conceptual framework supporting the AIE, with elements such as pluralism of views or multiperspectivity (decentring from one's own perspective)" (Méndez Garcia, 2017, p. 94).

Perspectives, attitudes, and perceptions are fundamentally volatile adapting to the ever-changing conditions; more of unconsciously shaped ideas of oneself and the other by considering the surrounding context, expectations, and personality, etc. The aspect of sense-making processes renders the dynamism of partaking in intercultural interactions highly multidimensional, stipulating taking into account a variety of elements, not only culture and identity. Communication is dyadically bound up with situational factors, and its processes cannot be fully fathomed only at the verbal level but also at the level of ideas, perspectives, assumptions, and impressions; any particular perception of interculturality has to prioritize meta-awareness and intersubjectivity that is involved in both intra and intercultural encounters. Intercultural communications are deliquescent since interlocutors yield easily to internal (in case of using a foreign language with a native speaker) and external pressure (interactional roles, power differentials, etc.).

Conceptualizing and enacting pluriversality in the context of ELT necessitates (a) considering how interlocutors bring to the communication different ontologies, perceptions, and ecologies that may hinder the smooth functioning of communicative activities; (b) a pluriversal understanding in the English teaching theory and praxis would require

challenging pre-defined and ostensibly popular perceptions of interculturality ; (c) moving towards perceiving intercultural interactions as a site of continuous intersubjective dialogue involving a myriad of cultures, identities, ontologies, and dynamics. That is why a more nuanced understanding of interculturality would entail dismissing simplistic considerations of intercultural communication in English language teaching. The fundamental interaction between cultural variables and various types of communication dictates that developing a profound knowledge about one requires an understanding of the other in a constructive fashion.

Advancing pluriversality of perspectives delivers an inclusive understanding of interculturality that discounts the normative assumptions regarding the conditions of successful intercultural interactions. Being driven by a pragmatic concern to only ensure the success of intercultural communicative activity may not help; since interlocutors might have a different subjective perception of success and then creates a conflict of ontologies resulting in dysfunctions in communication, which is not only about conveying messages but also ascertaining particular attitudes such as empathy, understanding, love...Intercultural English language teaching has to consider that (a) individuals not only communicate at the level of language but also emotions and impressions; (b) language is often used to construct socio-political realities, especially in the instances involving western and non-western ontologies (e.g., Sousa Santos's (2014) Epistemologies of the South); thus, language teaching has to adopt a de-westernized approach (Miike, 2006; Wang, 2011) presenting intercultural communication as a site of negotiation rather than a matter of cultural superiority and ascendancy.

The notion of pluriversal perspectives emphasizes the significance of equally considering the communication aspect and interculturality with its intersections with interculturalism/multiculturalism, western/ non-western ontologies, and education at knowledge production and pedagogical practicalities. The main arguments reside mainly at the micro-level, which better clarify the complexity of intercultural encounters in

addition to the potential communication dysfunctions.

First, accounting for the complexity of cultural variables and practices can partly be achieved by interpreting the observable representations of culture. For instance, this can be done by understanding the internal and external conceptions of individuals with the insights of intercultural theory such as cultural cognition/cultural linguistics (Sharifian, 2017); also, emphasizing a higher abstraction of meta-awareness and intersubjectivity (Holliday & Macdonald, 2020) coupled with a consideration of societal categories such as class, gender, and education. It is important to examine meta-cultural (awareness of cultural schemas and cultural cognition, but without stressing the overgeneralization and expectations) as an important element to enable "interlocutors to communicate and negotiate their cultural conceptualizations" (Sharifian, 2017, p. 109).

Second, scholars and instructors ought to reorient their conventions to draw on the relativity of individuals' cultural belonging and their constant exhibition of differential identities across multiples social situations Interculturality is often conceptualized in relation to how people exhibit their cultural identities in social interactions (Zhu, 2014, 2016). Despite the overriding contribution of culture in contrasting individuals' perception of reality and their attitudinal, affective, and behavioral patterns, it remains true that "belonging to a group does not mean, always and necessarily, the automatic presence of one or another form of behavior or pattern of communicative interaction" (Aneas & Paz Sandín, 2009, p. 5). Intercultural ELT has to cease recognizing individuals as representatives of particular cultures and thus completely ignore their inherent individuality since members of a given culture never express the same degree of identification, nor they reflect their cultures in a similar fashion. The metacognitive abilities (not set of qualities and behavioral expectations) have to be emphasized in order to denote a certain degree of ontological resilience that cannot be restricted to one specific context or range of identities; also, transcend any western-centric understanding of intercultural communication

(non-western individuals might be burdened by an assumption of cultural inferiority).

Finally, drawing on all the complexities discussed supra, managing rapport is highly influential in instances of intercultural interactions due to the high possibility of communicative dysfunctions and misunderstandings. Equipping learners with the necessary tools to skillfully maneuver in situations of failure in communication is rather preventive is the sense of avoiding aggravating issues. Conducting theoretically and practically accurate characterization of intercultural interactions stipulates considering that identities are subjected to constant change and modulation through human interactions and life experiences; advancing diversity as multiplicity, not difference and considering the co-construction of identity and culture during an interaction. The key elements remain co-construction of identities, the importance of relationship in interaction, representation of oneself and the other (western/non-western). English language teaching has to prioritize (a) not only teaching interculturality but teaching about interculturality to create a particular degree of meta-awareness; (b) encouraging students to critically analyze the processes and dynamics of intercultural interactions to achieve a higher level of independence in terms of objectives, strategies, actions, and reactions.

6. Concluding Remarks

English language teaching in current circumstances requires politically-sensitive perceptions of interculturality. If power imbalances are not examined in language teaching classrooms, attitudes of superiority and acts inequalities will be re-exercised and perpetuated. Particularly, non-western individuals will be overwhelmed by the necessity of conforming to western values and ontologies. Intercultural education in ELT has to critique and undermine possible acts of oppression that may take place between individuals during intercultural encounters. Teachers are encouraged to embrace interculturally critical teaching that does not "restrict itself to corrective interventions within the curriculum, but rather aims at the radical transformation of the educational system (curricula, school manuals, teaching

strategies, teacher training) with the perspective of societal change" (Maniatis, 2012, p. 157). Also, preparing students for future encounters has to reflect the mission of realizing an emancipatory and transforming objective. It is important to investigate whether cultural literacy in English language teaching may lead to cultural enrichment or derichment. There is indeed a possibility that exposing students to English culture in southern contexts may lead to cultural derichment as students distance themselves from their own native culture (Pishghadam & Navari, 2009).

Another possible trajectory for English language teaching is to bind knowing and being (Bradley & Harvey, 2019). For example, students can be instructed to engage in intercultural interactions and note the different processes and attitudes that they have noticed. Participating in different intercultural interactions with individuals from different socioeconomic and sociocultral contexts can at least offer an understanding of how power relations can impact communication. If students fail to recognize such processes, teachers can help them identify the extent to which meta-awareness of different factors (e.g., interactional roles, socioeconomic status, nationality, etc.) can help ascertain a mutually communicative experience. Power imbalances are ubiquitous but can be addressed by mutual understanding or co-construction of meaning.

While intercultural education's main focus is to support social justice (Lawyer, 2018), its implementation with social justice in ELT could be realized by exploring their association "with one another so that they can more effectively serve as a vehicle for promoting social justice" (Cho, 2017, p. 3). For this purpose, dialectical perspective recognizes these complexities and call for more comprehensive coverage of the mutual influence of culture and communication. Going beyond the singular approach in ELT can address multiple problems at the same time, including linguistic, cultural, and societal issues.

Intercultural language education should make a case for the epistemological complexity of intercultural, which is highly relevant in today's classrooms due to increased

intercultural interaction. While western-centric attitudes continue to pervade the world, including the field of ELT (R'boul, 2020a), scholars and teachers should construct orientations that are responsive to these historical processes, which further perpetuate inequalities and injustices. Teachers can imepelnt culture and interculturality-focused tasks (Ghasemi Mighani & Yazdani Moghadam, 2019) that draw on meaingfull representations of power imbalances Suggested strategies to pedagogically account for the complexity of intercultural interactions include:

- Individuals' meta-awareness of the multiplicity of their identities and cultures and those of the other communicator.
- Pluriversality of perspectives that takes into account multiple ontologies, orientations and realities.
- Intersubjectivity and metacognitive dynamics.
- Contextual awareness --being mindful of the characteristic aspects and specificities of interaction along with the percipient consideration of nature and the purpose of the communicative activity
- Considering the particularities and details of the situation at hand (individuals' personality and social position, etc.)
- Delineating the nature of the relationship between individuals (power and distance), by the interactional role (interlocutors select and act out particular roles during communicative activities in a particular social context) and by the type of interaction (face-to-face, online, etc.)
- Overcoming dysfunctions in communication and misunderstandings that may arise in intercultural communication; adapting one's language and actions to the context and the other communicator.
- Accentuating students' awareness of power imbalances and how they can be crystallized in intercultural communication
- Interculturality has to be perceived under the rubrics of non-linearity;

advancing education that is based on fixed parameters, e.g., intercultural communicative competence (Estaji & Rahimi, 2018) is rather simplistic and only driven by a pragmatic concern.

References

Abid, N., & Moalla, A. (2020). The promotion of the good intercultural speaker through intercultural contacts in a Tunisian EFL textbook. *Language and Intercultural Communication*, *20*(1), 37-49.

Aman, R. (2018). *Decolonising intercultural education: Colonial differences, the geopolitics of knowledge, and inter-epistemic dialogue*. London, England: Routledge.

Aneas, M., & Paz Sandín, A. (2009). Intercultural and cross-cultural communication research: Some reflections about culture and qualitative methods. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung [Forum: Qualitative Social Research]*, *10*(1), 51-70.

Arasaratnam, L. A. (2015). Research in intercultural communication: Reviewing the past decade. *Journal of International and Intercultural Communication*, *4*, 290-310.

Baker, W. (2015). *Culture and identity through English as a lingua franca: Rethinking concepts and goals in intercultural communication*. Berlin, Germany: De Gruyter Mouton.

Bakhtin, M. (1981). *The dialogical imagination*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.

Bakhtin, M. (1984). *Problems of Dosteyevsky's "poetics"* (C. Emerson, Trans.). Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Bakhtin, M. (1986). *Speech genres and other later essays.* Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.

Bakhtin, M. (1990). *Art and answerability: Early philosophical essays by M. M. Bakhtin*. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Bradley, J., & Harvey. L. (2019). Creative inquiry in applied linguistics: Language, communication and the arts. In C. Wright, L. Harvey, & J. Simpson (Eds.), *Voices and practices in applied*

linguistics: Diversifying a discipline (pp. 91–107). York, Ont: White Rose University Press.

Burrell, G., & Morgan. G. (1988). *Sociological paradigms and organizational analysis*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Byram, M. (1997). *Teaching and assessing intercultural communicative competence.* Clevedon, England: Multilingual Matters.

Byram, M., & Wagner. M. (2018). Making a difference: Language teaching for intercultural and international dialogue. *Foreign Language Annals*, *51*, 140–151.

Cantle, T. (2012). Interculturalism: For the era of globalization, cohesion and diversity. *Political Insight*, *3*, 38–41.

Cho, H. (2017). Navigating the meanings of social justice, teaching for social justice, and multicultural education. *International Journal of Multicultural Education*, *192*, 1-19.

Collins, H. (2018). Interculturality from above and below: Navigating uneven discourses in a neoliberal university system. *Language and Intercultural Communication*, *2*, 167–183.

Croucher, S. M., Sommier, M., & Rahmani. D. (2015). Intercultural communication: Where we've been, where we're going, issues we face. *Communication Research and Practice*, *11*, 71-87.

Deardorff, D. K. (2009). *The SAGE handbook of intercultural competence*. London, England: Sage Publications.

Deetz, S., & Simpson. J. L. (2004). Critical organizational dialogue: Open formation and the demand of "otherness". In R. Anderson, L. A. Baxter, & K. N. Cissna (Eds.), *Dialogue: Theorizing difference in communication studies* (pp. 141–158). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Dervin, F. (2016). *Interculturality in education: A theoretical and methodological toolbox*. London, England: Palgrave Macmillan.

DeWaelsche, S. A. (2015). Critical thinking, questioning and student engagement in Korean university English courses. *Linguistics and Education*, *32*, 131-147.

Estaji, M., & Rahimi, A. (2018). Exploring teachers' perception of intercultural communicative competence and their practices for teaching culture in EFL classrooms. *International Journal of*

Society, Culture & Language, *6*(2), 1-18.

Frame, A. (2014). On cultures and interactions: Theorising the complexity of intercultural encounters. In S. Poutiainen (Ed.), *Theoretical turbulence in intercultural communication studies* (pp. 29-44). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Frey, L. R., & Palmer. D. L. (2014). *Teaching communication activism: Communication education for social justice*. New York, NY: Hampton Press.

Ghasemi Mighani, M., & Yazdani Moghadam, M. (2019). Building intercultural sensitivity in pre-service EFL teachers through interactive culture-focused speaking tasks. *International Journal of Society, Culture & Language*, *7*(2), 27-39.

Gorski, P. (2008). Good intentions are not enough: A decolonizing intercultural education. *Intercultural Education*, *6*, 515–525.

Guilherme, M. (2019). The critical and decolonial quest for intercultural epistemologies and discourses. *Journal of Multicultural Discourses*, *1*, 1-13.

Halualani, R., Mendoza, S. L., & Drzewiecka. J. A. (2009). "Critical" junctures in intercultural communication studies: A review. *Review of Communication*, *1*, 17-35.

Holliday, A. R., & MacDonald. M. N. (2020). Researching the intercultural: Intersubjectivity and the problem with postpositivism. *Applied Linguistics*, *41*(5) 621-639.

Jocelyn, H., Constanza, T., Christine, B., & Martin. E. (2019). Shifting conceptualisations of foreign language teaching in New Zealand: Students' journeys towards developing intercultural capability. *Language and Intercultural Communication*, *6*, 555-569.

Lawyer, G. (2018). The dangers of separating social justice from multicultural education: Applications in higher education. *International Journal of Multicultural Education*, *201*, 86-101.

Levey, G. B. (2012). Interculturalism vs. multiculturalism: A distinction without a difference?. *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, *2*, 217-224.

Littlewood, W. (2007). Communicative and task-based language teaching in East Asian classrooms. *Language Teaching*, *3*, 243-249.

Maniatis, P. (2012). Critical intercultural education: Necessities and prerequisites for its development in Greece. *Journal for Critical Education Policy Studies*, *101*, 156–167.

Martin, J. N., & Nakayama. T. K. (1999). Thinking dialectically about culture and communication. *Communication Theory*, *1*, 1-25.

Martin, J. N., & Nakayama, T. K. (2010). Intercultural communication and dialectics revisited. In R. T. Halualani & T. K. Nakayama (Eds.), *Handbook of critical intercultural communication* (pp. 51–83). Malden, MA: Blackwell

Martin, J. N., & Nakayama. T. K. (2015). Reconsidering intercultural communication competence in the workplace: A dialectical approach. *Language and Intercultural Communication*, *1*, 13-28.

Meer, N., & Modood, T. (2012). How does interculturalism contrast with multiculturalism? *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, *2*, 175-196.

Méndez García, M. (2017). Intercultural reflection through the autobiography of intercultural encounters: Students' accounts of their images of alterity. *Language and Intercultural Communication*, *17*(2), 90-117.

Mendoza, S. L., Halualani, R. T., & Drzewiecka. J. A. (2002). Moving the discourse on identities in intercultural communication: Structure, culture, and resignifications. *Communication Quarterly, 503*(4), 312-327.

Miike, Y. (2006). Non-western theory in western research? An Asiacentric agenda for Asian communication studies. *Review of Communication*, *1-2*, 4-31.

Nair-Venugopalal, S. (2009). Interculturalities: Reframing identities in intercultural communication. *Language and Intercultural Communication*, *2*, 76–90.

Palaiologou, N., & Gorski, P. C. (2017). The evolution of intercultural and multicultural education: Scholarship and practice for new sociopolitical and economic realities. *Intercultural Education*, *28*(4), 353-355.

Pishghadam, R., & Navari, S. (2009, May). *Cultural literacy in language learning: Enrichment or derichment?* Paper presented in the International Conference on Languages, Malaysia.

R'boul, H. (2020a). Re-imagining intercultural communication dynamics in TESOL: Culture/interculturality. *Journal for Multicultural Education*, *142*, 177-188.

R'boul, H. (2020b). The spread of English in Morocco: Examining university students' language ontologies. *English Today.* https://doi.org/10.1017/S0266078420000449

R'boul, H. (2020c). Postcolonial interventions in intercultural communication knowledge: Meta-Intercultural ontologies, decolonial knowledges and epistemological polylogue. *Journal of International and Intercultural Communication*. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/17513057.2020.1829676

R'boul, H. (2021). North/south imbalances in intercultural communication education. *Language and Intercultural Communication*. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14708477.2020.1866593

Sharifian, F. (2011). *Cultural conceptualisations and language: Theoretical framework and applications.* Amsterdam, Netherlands: John Benjamins.

Sharifian, F. (2017). *Cultural linguistics: Cultural conceptualizations and language.* Amsterdam, Netherlands: John Benjamins.

Sobre, M. C. (2017). Developing the critical intercultural class-space: Theoretical implications and pragmatic applications of critical intercultural communication pedagogy. *Intercultural Education*, *1*, 39-59.

Sousa Santos, B. (2014). *Epistemologies of the South*. Boulder, CO: Paradigm.

Tinghe, J. (2017). Moving beyond 'intercultural competence': Interculturality in the learning of Mandarin in UK universities. *Language and Intercultural Communication*, *17*(3), 306-322.

Venugopal, S. N. (2009). Interculturalities: Reframing identities in intercultural communication. *Language and Intercultural Communication*, *2*, 76-90.

Wang, G. (2011). *De-Westernizing communication research*. London, England: Routledge.

Zhao, H. Q., & Coombs. S. (2012). Teaching and learning strategies for global citizens: A Chinese EFL perspective. *Teaching in Higher Education*, *3*, 245–257.

Zhu, H. (2014). *Exploring intercultural communication: Language in action*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Zhu, H. (2016). 'Where are you from?' Interculturality and interactional practices. In A. Komisarof & H. Zhu (Eds.), *Crossing boundaries and weaving intercultural work, life, and scholarship in globalizing universities* (pp. 147–159). New York, NY: Routledge.

Zotzmann, K. (2015). Discourses of intercultural communication and education. In P. Smeyers, D. Bridges, N. Burbules, & M. Griffiths (Eds.), *International handbook of interpretation in educational research methods* (pp. 371-397). Berlin, Germany: Springer.