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## (Re)imagining a course in intercultural communication for the 21st century



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### Abstract

Over twenty-five years ago, leading scholars in the field of intercultural communication William B. Gudykunst, Stella Ting-Toomey and Richard Wiseman published the paper “*Taming the beast: Designing a course in intercultural communication.*” We revisit their work in light of renewed interest in the design and implementation of the intercultural communication (ICC) course as a key site for engaging with diversity in universities around the world. Our paper draws on Gudykunst *et al.*’s overview of four major issues instructors should consider in designing and delivering an introductory ICC course: (a) philosophical and ethical issues, (b) pedagogical issues, (c) curricular content; and (d) resources and teaching techniques. We draw on these four issues to conduct a critical appraisal of the current state of the ICC field and to reflect on Gudykunst *et al.*’s recommendations in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We pay particular attention to the increasingly stronger links between the fields of ICC and modern/foreign language (MFL) education through the key role that language(s) play in meaning making in interaction. We therefore use the issues identified by Gudykunst *et al.*’s seminal work as a springboard to discuss key parameters that may assist instructors in the design of a reimagined ICC course, responsive to the crucial role of language and languages in engaging with diversity.

**Keywords:** intercultural communication, languages, higher education, teaching

### Introduction

Framed within internationalisation discourses, mission statements of higher education institutions (HEIs) around the world incorporate, albeit under many guises, the development of “intercultural competence”<sup>1</sup> as an essential attribute of the “global graduate” (J. M. Bennett, 2015; Brooks & Waters, 2013; Killick, 2016). Broadly speaking, HEIs refer to “intercultural competence” as representing a

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wide-ranging set of cognitive, affective and behavioural skills useful in dealing with the increasing diversity (cultural, religious, socio-economic, etc.) of the world in which we live, and the pressing global challenges confronting us as a result. Against this backdrop, there has been renewed interest in the design and implementation of the intercultural communication (ICC) course as a key site for the development of such competencies both at undergraduate level (see, for instance, Lee, Poch, Shaw & Williams, 2012, and Chun & Evans, 2016, discussing the US context) and postgraduate level, as reported by a recent study on the “boom” in ICC degree courses in the UK context (Zhu, Handford, & Young, 2017).

ICC courses have a relatively short history, with the first ICC courses being introduced in the United States at the University of Pittsburgh and Michigan State University in the 1970s, mostly in communication departments (see Martin, Nakayama, & Carbaugh, 2012, for a comprehensive historical overview of the development of ICC courses in the US and around the world). Since then, the provision of ICC degree courses has expanded rapidly in Higher Education institutions (HEIs) worldwide (Zhu, Handford, & Young, 2017) with some of these institutions considering the need to make ICC courses a mandatory component in various degree programs such as international business, medicine, nursing, etc.

With the proliferation of ICC courses, particularly, in Anglophone contexts, studies have emerged every few years surveying, reviewing and comparing ICC courses’ syllabi and rationales (see, for instance, Beebe & Biggers, 1986; Fantini, 1997; Milhouse, 1996; Yueh & Copeland, 2015) in the US and also in other countries around the world (Fantini, 1997; Zhu *et al.*, 2017). Specific advice on how to design and implement ICC courses’ curricula, however, dates back over forty years (Barna & Jain, 1978; Goodyear & Williams, 1973; Prosser, 1974) to when these courses first emerged. While Gudykunst, Ting-Toomey and Wiseman’s paper “*Taming the beast: Designing a course in intercultural communication*” (1991) is not the first to focus on providing practical guidelines for course design and curriculum development, it is distinctive in its detailed overview of “the major issues” instructors must face in designing and delivering an introductory course in intercultural communication. At the time of publication, now more than twenty-five years ago, this paper aimed to address the perceived need to provide a “master syllabus for introductory intercultural communication” (1991, p. 272) for instructors involved in the delivery of such courses, instructors who—as had been reported by Beebe and Biggers (1986)—had no “formal graduate training in the area” and thus “no baseline for what to include in their courses.” As such, Gudykunst *et al.* outlined four key issues to consider in the development of an introductory ICC course: (1) *philosophical issues*, (2) *pedagogical issues* (3) *course content* (e.g., *objectives, texts, potential assessment tasks*), and (4) *resources and teaching techniques available*; which can be considered as moving along a continuum, from the more abstract to the more concrete.

Our aim in this paper is to appraise the relevance of the issues identified by Gudykunst *et al.*, particularly in light of the recently made connections between the fields of intercultural communication and modern/foreign language (MFL) education (Martin *et al.*, 2012). The meeting of these fields around a common goal – the development of intercultural (communicative) competence—and interest in exploring cultural diversity in human communication, as well as their convergence in terms of concepts (e.g., politeness, linguistic determinism/relativism), research methods (e.g., ethnography) and pedagogical approaches (e.g., critical pedagogy) appear to hold the potential to effectively “prepare graduates for the cognitive and intercultural complexity of the twenty-first century” (Lee, Poch, Shaw, & Williams, 2012, p. 1; see also Stein-Smith, 2016, in relation to issues of diversity and MFL education in the US context) and positively impact the multicultural and transnational societies in which we now live.

While one of the earliest references explicitly exploring the “conscious cooperation” between ICC and MFL was published around the same time as Gudykunst *et al.*’s paper (Roby, 1992), it is only recently that systematic links have been drawn in ways that are enabling these two fields to complement each other more productively. This is reflected, for instance, in a number of ICC textbooks which foreground the role of language in intercultural communication (e.g., Piller, 2011; Jackson, 2014; Zhu, 2014) as well as several academic publications narrowing the theoretical and empirical gaps between the two fields: for instance, *The Sage Handbook of Intercultural Competence* (Deardorff, 2009) and *The Routledge Handbook of Language and Intercultural Communication* (Jackson, 2012). The systematic integration of ICC and MFL research and practice appears to be ever more driven by a *critical* pedagogical approach to the study of languages and cultures, that is, an approach explicitly concerned with exploration of the philosophical, ethical and power-bound dynamics of human interaction (Dasli & Díaz, 2017; Atay & Toyosaki, 2018; Ferri, 2018).

Against this background and through a systematic review of extant literature, we draw on the issues identified by Gudykunst *et al.*’s seminal work as a springboard to discuss key parameters that can form the basis for the overall design of a renewed intercultural communication course consonant with the study of “language and languages” from a critical perspective. While we acknowledge that these issues are not exhaustive, they provide a clear starting point to open a dialogue on the design of a course of this kind against the current HE landscape. Our critical appraisal is organised following Gudykunst *et al.*’s outline of these issues.

This paper is part of a larger needs analysis research project whose long-term goal is to identify the intended learning outcomes of language courses which specifically relate to intercultural communication (Moore & Díaz, Forthcoming, 2019). This project seeks, in turn, to align identified intended learning outcomes with teaching, learning and assessment activities within a standalone, first-year, compulsory ICC course with “language and languages” as its conducting thread and with the development of intercultural communicative competence as its overall educational objective. While our research project is situated within the Australian HE sector, the parameters identified here are of relevance to cognate educational contexts internationally.

## 1. Philosophical Issues

Under this loosely defined philosophical umbrella category, Gudykunst *et al.* grouped four key interrelated aspects: 1) how culture and intercultural communication are conceptualised; 2) how the choice between culture-specific versus culture-general approaches is made; 3) how cultural variability is explained; and 4) how intercultural communication is explained. While all four aspects are still relevant in today’s educational contexts and should be considered in designing a new course, some of the suggestions made by the authors warrant further interrogation.

In terms of 1) how culture and intercultural communication are conceptualised in the ICC course, for instance, Gudykunst *et al.* mainly referred to the distinction and pedagogical implications of conceiving intercultural communication (understood as interaction between interactants from different cultures) as a unique area of studies different from *intracultural* communication (i.e., between interactants from the same group/culture). They discouraged such a view, arguing instead for a more encompassing way of understanding communication processes, which they considered to be the same for both *inter* and *intracultural* interactions.

Similarly, when discussing 2) the choice between culture-specific versus culture-general approaches—that is, whether a course should focus on examining and providing guidelines for interaction with members of a specific cultural group, or whether it should focus on the general factors influencing

communication between people from different cultural groups—they urged instructors to favour the latter. The reasoning behind their position was rooted in their argument that the same underlying communication processes take place in interaction between people from different national cultures and between people from different domestic/intergroup cultures (e.g., subcultures, ethnicities, etc.). They further justified this approach by acknowledging that, at the time, “the vast majority of people teaching intercultural courses [did] not even [have] undergraduate or graduate courses in intercultural communication [and it was therefore] unlikely that many instructors [would] be area experts” (p. 274), qualified to adequately address culture-specific aspects in communication.

Much has changed since then. The dialogue in the ICC field has moved away from the binary distinctions discussed in Gudykunst *et al.*'s paper in order to consider deeper theoretical, ethical and ideological debates (Dervin & Tournebise, 2013; Ferri, 2014). These debates have led to a number of ontological and epistemological “breaks” (Kumaravadivelu, 2012) which have, in turn, cumulatively and progressively combined to trigger a number of paradigm shifts in the pedagogy of both ICC and MFL. These debates and shifts have been characterised by the oscillation between traditional “modern” and emerging “postmodern” understandings of culture in interaction (Canagarajah, 2012, 2013; see also, Holliday, 2018), how it is understood and researched. While the former tends to view culture as static, stable and monolithic representations, typically synonymous with essentialist notions of national origin, the latter embraces the fluid nature of culture as liquid, emergent and dynamically co-constructed by interactants. In this context, the role of language in realising, expressing and negotiating their identities (as self-oriented or as ascribed by others) becomes paramount (Zhu, 2014).

Against this background and as an alternative way of approaching 3) “cultural variability” in interaction, “interculturality” has emerged as a line of investigation that departs from essentialist traditions of seeing (national) cultural memberships or cultural differences, largely, if not always, as something given, static and monolithic. Instead, “interculturality” problematises cultural identities and emphasizes the emergent, discursive and *inter*-nature of interactions (Zhu, 2014, p. 209). As an emerging research paradigm, interculturality focuses neither on the causes of break-down in intercultural communication, nor on the trajectory of cultural differences. Instead, it seeks to interpret how participants make (aspects of) their (cultural) identities relevant or irrelevant to interactions through the interplay of self-orientation and ascription by others and the interplay of language use and social-cultural identities (Zhu, 2014, 2015). By asking such questions as: Are cultural memberships always relevant to interaction?, How do participants *do* cultural identities?, What interactional resources are available for *doing* cultural identities?, interculturality provides an analytical lens through which to explore the dynamic construction of identities (specifically, cultural identities) as a process and outcome of negotiation rather than something established purely *a priori*. For example, interactants can “resist” cultural membership assigned by others by dismissing the relevance of the category, by actively avoiding it and even by ethnifying the ethnifier, that is, by assigning cultural memberships to those who assign memberships in the first place. In this context, the central role of verbal and non-verbal interactional resources emerges as key to bring about, align, or resist cultural memberships oriented by participants themselves or ascribed by others (Zhu, 2014, pp. 208-220).

As a result, many concepts discussed by Gudykunst *et al.*—e.g., high-context/low-context, individualism/collectivism, uncertainty avoidance – traditionally used to describe “cultural variability” in interaction crumble in these shifting theoretical grounds. So do the authors’ suggestions on 4) how to “explain” intercultural communication. Indeed, ICC’s traditional views emphasising an *a priori* notion of misunderstanding or non-understanding inherent to intercultural communication are increasingly being replaced by dynamic, interpretive notions of what actually happens in interaction (see Zhu, 2016a, for a discussion of research paradigms emerging from these shifts), particularly, as it pertains to differences in cultural identity.

While the theoretical and philosophical issues raised by Gudykunst *et al.* have undergone significant reconceptualisation in the last twenty-five years, little of this reconceptualisation appears to be reflected at the level of institutional and curricular reform. Indeed, as Zhu *et al.*'s 2017 study suggests, institutions continue to frame the offering of ICC courses within reified, solid notions of "culture," demonstrating a "lack of infiltration by more interpretive, critical, and constructivist positions on culture and interculturality into what can be seen, from a western perspective at least, as one of the most important and main arenas of contemporary [intercultural communication in higher education]" (Zhu *et al.*, 2017). With respect to curricular reform, the role of instructors as key drivers of curricular change and pedagogical innovation becomes apparent. Here, it is important to note that while the presumed target audience in Gudykunst *et al.*'s paper consisted of instructors with little formal training in the field of ICC, at present, ICC instructors' educational profiles have changed significantly. The following section will discuss ICC instructors' new profiles along with other pedagogical issues raised in Gudykunst *et al.*'s paper.

## 2. Pedagogical Issues

In this category, Gudykunst *et al.* started by highlighting the need to provide balanced attention to the development of the cognitive, affective and behavioural dimensions of intercultural learning (dealt with in section 4 below). The authors then turned the spotlight onto what they called "instructor's style of teaching" which they reduced to the ways in which instructors communicate, that is, how they use language inside and outside the classroom. Here, they highlighted the importance of having instructors "model effective intercultural communication" by explicitly challenging stereotypes and by using inclusive language: "it is imperative that instructors use inclusive language that is non-sexist, nonracist, and non-ethnocentric, and watch out for subtle areas where our everyday language might be inappropriate" (p. 276).

While promoting greater inclusivity in language use (e.g. in terms of religion, race, gender, etc.) is arguably even more significant in today's educational contexts – and not only in ICC and MFL courses – several studies since "*Taming the beast*" have also pointed to the key role of the teacher in enacting and modelling such intercultural sensitivities inside and outside the classroom (Lee *et al.*, 2012). Increased awareness of teachers' need to reflexively engage with these aspects of their practice has prompted HEIs to consider institution-wide, cross-disciplinary intercultural development programs for faculty (see, for example, Garson, Bourassa, & Odgers, 2016) as well as the development of "intercultural teaching competence" models (e.g., Dimitrov & Haque, 2016) which may capture and articulate key competencies and strategies necessary to effectively engage with diversity in class.

Much like students, instructors cross the classroom threshold with their own repertoire of intercultural capabilities stemming from their own personal and professional experiences. In "*Taming the beast*," Gudykunst *et al.* make reference to Beebe and Biggers' 1986 survey of introductory ICC courses across a sample of 236 universities in the US. This survey described the profile of the ICC course instructor as holding a professional (tenured) rank and having developed professionally mostly through workshops. As mentioned earlier, Gudykunst *et al.*'s envisaged audience at the time would have been largely composed of instructors with little formal training in the field of ICC. Three decades later, the typical profile of teachers involved in these courses has changed dramatically, not only in terms of academic backgrounds and employment conditions, but also in terms of their own diversity (see, for instance, Y. W. Chen, 2014, describing racial diversity in the US context).

Today, we have access to ICC and MFL instructors' voices and their perspectives on the challenging nature of their roles. The proliferation of case studies and (auto)ethnographic accounts of teachers involved in the design and delivery of university ICC courses in various countries around the world

(see, for example, Y. W. Chen, 2014; Gandana & Parr, 2013; Hamlet, 2009; Root, Hargrove, Ngampornchai, & Petrunia, 2013) reveal the many challenges they face in trying to model intercultural communication, personal and professional beliefs about ICC. These studies bring to light the cases of teachers whose agency is compromised as they try to reconcile, for instance, not having the power to change an inherited or institutionally imposed syllabus and teaching materials with their own personal and professional beliefs about ICC.

Gudykunst *et al.*'s suggestions regarding ICC instructors' roles can be extrapolated to current trends in the field of MFL education where a deeper ethical basis for language pedagogy is gaining momentum (see for example, Enns-Kananen, 2016; Levine & Phipps, 2012). This means that – similarly to ICC instructors – MFL teachers' pedagogical choices are more than ever considered to embody a political and ethical positioning (Kubanyiova & Crookes, 2016). Within this “critical” vision of their pedagogical endeavour (Kubota, 2012), interaction cannot be conceived as taking place between two equal parties with different, essentialised national backgrounds, but rather as historically and politically situated exchanges in which the interactants' socio-economic power differentials are at play (Block, 2013). Thus, key to the pedagogical implementation of this vision is the problematisation of power hierarchies in interaction. While these critical concerns and theoretical frameworks continue to gain momentum in these fields (Halualani, 2011; Kubota, 2014; Levine & Phipps, 2012; Nakayama & Halualani, 2011; Phipps & Guilherme, 2004; Piller, 2011), much work remains to be conducted to explore their concrete realisation inside the classroom (see for instance, Y.-W. Chen & Lawless, 2018).

### 3. Course Content

Under this category, Gudykunst *et al.* grouped learning objectives, textbooks and potential assessment tasks. While it is not possible to delve into each of these in detail, here we would like to reflect on the driving learning objective, which relates to the development of intercultural competence and the contentious nature of its assessment.

Gudykunst *et al.* did not discuss a specific model of intercultural competence; instead they listed discrete learning objectives (e.g., increasing course participants' understanding of how culture influences communication; increasing participants' ability to explain cultural similarities and differences in communication; etc.). Over the last few decades, however, several models have emerged to try to capture the nature of intercultural learning and the potential ways in which to map its many dimensions: cognitive, affective and behavioural. Spitzberg and Changnon (2009) provide a comprehensive review of the many models currently available. They classify these models as: (1) *Compositional models*, which propose a list of attitudes, skills, knowledge, and behaviours without specifying the way(s) in which they are related; (2) *Co-orientational models*, which concentrate on interactions and on the construction of self and other; (3) *Developmental models*, which describe how individuals acquire intercultural competences; (4) *Adaptational models*, which examine adjustment and adaptation of people involved in intercultural encounters; and (5) *Causal path models*, which are interested in how different components of intercultural competences are related. Among the reviewed models, however, three continue to be particularly influential in ICC and MFL: Milton Bennett's Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) (1993) developed in the US, which they classify as developmental; Michael Byram's intercultural communicative competence model (1997), set against the European language education context, which they classify as co-orientational; and Darla Deardorff's intercultural competence model (2006), concerned with HEIs and internationalisation processes, which they classify under both compositional and causal. Despite their overall contribution to the formulation of specific “learning outcomes” and “course objectives,” these models – with the exception of Byram's ongoing work in the field of MFL—have not been accompanied by complementary pedagogical frameworks that may enable their realisation in the classroom.

Furthermore, in recent times and largely as a result of the paradigmatic shifts discussed earlier, emerging postmodern interpretations of human interaction and what is actually involved in intercultural learning processes have put into question the very nature of these models (Dervin, 2016). Specifically, these models have been criticised for their Anglo/Eurocentric origins, for focusing on isolated, individual performances rather than the context-sensitive, dialogic co-construction of meaning between interactants and for ultimately reifying the intercultural learning process, that is, “as if interculturality could be pre-programmed and stabilised” (Dervin, 2016, p. 75). Ultimately, these models tend to support a view of intercultural learning as a relatively linear process of staged (progressive) personal development towards a seemingly “complete,” final state of “fulfilment” represented by an unproblematised “ideal intercultural interlocutor” (see Zhou & Pilcher, 2018 for further discussion of this point). Alternatively, as Liddicoat and Kohler (2012) argue:

...to be intercultural involves continuous intercultural learning through experience and critical reflection. There can be no final end-point at which the individual achieves the intercultural state, but rather to be intercultural is by its very nature an unfinishable work-in-progress of action in response to new experiences and reflection on the action. (p. 81)

This renewed understanding of the intercultural learning process seems to focus on describing its features rather than reducing it to a single model. This process is characterised as subjective, life-long, life-wide, whole-person, non-linear, liquid, dynamic and unpredictable, inconsistent (open to transformation – may progress or regress), unstable and incoherent (may at times be transgressed or manipulated) and it transcends linguistically-biased notions of proficiency and competence but is always related to language (Dervin, 2010). This set of features begs the question “if we accept that intercultural learning is essentially subjective and hence rather unpredictable, how can we describe the outcomes *in advance* as specific competencies and attempt to teach or even assess them?” (Zotzmann, 2015, p. 118, emphasis added; see also Borghetti, 2017).

Implications for the assessment of intercultural learning conceptualised as such are therefore deeply entrenched in a paradoxical condition. According to Zotzmann (2015), this paradox juxtaposes emerging post-modern anti-essentialist claims about language and culture in interaction with the pervasive nature of performance-driven notions of “competence” promoted in the HE context. Overall, despite these emerging trends, there still remain strong tendencies to link static, reified versions of culture and identity to the ways we negotiate meaning in interaction. Ultimately, these tendencies help support and perpetuate reductionist, instrumental and performance-based conceptualisations of intercultural learning and the kind of assessment that may be required to determine the “achievement” of these competences.

Against this complex backdrop, practical advice found in the literature suggests that instructors should embrace a multimodality of long-term pathways for the promotion of intercultural learning. These pathways should have a focus on the process rather than the product; they should allow for multi-perspective, individual, collaborative and peer-learning opportunities as well as experiential tasks (such as ethnographic inquiry) that highlight the subjective nature of the intercultural learning process. This means a focus on promoting and eliciting learners’ (individual and first-person) reflective processes that may lead to questioning (*un-learning*) of the self and of the interpretive, meaning-making processes involved in interaction (Deardorff, 2015, 2016) as well as a broader, critical engagement with diversity in communication (Kvam, Considine, & Palmeri, 2018).

Here, there emerges the need for alternative paradigms of assessment – no longer something that is “done” to learners but rather something that promotes their engagement in less alienating ways, such as posing the question: how do *learners* view assessment practices as relevant to their *own contexts*?

(Deardorff, 2015, 2016). In the MFL education field, the work by Liddicoat and Scarino (2013) offers practical suggestions, for instance, the need for renewed understandings of our role as subjective “teachers/assessors” in the intercultural language learning process (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013; Scarino, 2013). Witte (2014) draws on the concept of Dynamic Assessment (DA) as a potential framework to conceptualise the assessment of intercultural learning. DA, Witte argues, does not separate the domains of instruction and evaluation but treats them as two sides of the same coin. Conceptually, DA is anchored in Vygotsky’s (1978) theory of the “zone of proximal development,” or ZPD. As such, DA does not aim at the retrospective assessment of achieved progress, but it is aimed at the immediate future of the next learning zone of the individual learner. In other words: “DA is a future-in-the-making model where assessment and instruction are dialectically integrated as the means to move toward an always emergent (i.e., dynamic) future rather than a fixed endpoint” (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006, p. 330; see also Harsch & Poehner, 2016).

To sum up, while intercultural learning outcomes warrant re-definition, re-formulation and re-alignment with new perspectives on what it means to be an intercultural being, such processes also necessarily entail consideration of alternative pathways for promoting renewed understandings of intercultural learning and of ways of gathering evidence of its unfolding.

#### 4. Teaching Resources and Techniques

In this closing section in “*Taming the beast*,” Gudykunst *et al.* provided a list of suggestions that may assist in the development of three key learning dimensions: cognitive, affective and behavioural. For each of these dimensions, they listed and reviewed activities and resources available to instructors. Under the cognitive category, Gudykunst *et al.* focused on relevant handbooks, textbooks and video tape series. Today, the decision of whether to use a prescribed textbook or not remains a critical one. Many instructors may select a prescribed textbook with integrated practical exercises and even a website companion with additional teaching resources. This has certainly been the traditional approach, which typically results in the textbook becoming the *de facto* curriculum/syllabus upon which instructors map the course’s content. This is supported by Gudykunst *et al.*’s suggestion that “the specific [course] outline an instructor uses should be based on the text he or she selects” (p. 279).

At present, a number of recently published handbooks and textbooks seeking to make explicit, stronger connections between ICC and its linguistic dimension, as well as to contribute to non-essentialist, critical turns in the field (see, for example, Holliday, 2011, 2013; Holliday, Hyde, & Kullman, 2010; Jackson, 2014; Nakayama & Halualani, 2011; Paulston, Kiesling, & Rangel, 2012; Piller, 2011; Zhu, 2014), all provide an alternative to those resources listed in Gudykunst *et al.*. Reviewing relevant textbooks is beyond the scope of this paper; however, available analytical reviews such as Inuzuka’s (2013) provide a useful synthesis upon which instructors can make informed decisions.

In addition to handbooks and textbooks, today, there also exists a plethora of stimulating theoretical and empirical research published in the form of scholarly papers which can serve as core reading material for the ICC course (examples can be drawn from a wide range of relevant journals such as the *Journal of Intercultural Communication Research*, the *Language and Intercultural Communication Journal*, *Intercultural Pragmatics*, among others). Indeed, deciding on a reading list rather than a prescribed textbook can give instructors the flexibility to create their own set of compulsory and supplementary reading materials from a wider range of sources and, importantly, ideological perspectives. Of course, it is then up to instructors to complement such readings with study guides and activities to unpack their content critically. In fact, regardless of whether instructors choose a textbook or set of readings, these should not be treated as unproblematic or incontestable; instead,

their content should be subject to negotiation and interpretation through open dialogue in the classroom.

Under both the affective and behavioural dimensions, Gudykunst *et al.* refer to role-playing and simulation activities as well as self-assessment tasks. With respect to simulations, they focus on one that had proven particularly useful, the classic *BaFa*, developed by Shirts in 1977, an activity that remains widely used across disciplines beyond ICC (Sullivan & Duplaga, 1997). Finally, in terms of teaching techniques (practical ideas and activities) to implement in the ICC classroom, there are also countless teaching ideas available in scholarly papers which can also help instructors further develop their courses (in addition to empirical studies in journals mentioned above, see, for instance, the “Original Teaching Activities” section of the journal *Communication Teacher*).

Overall, as a key point of intersection between theory and practice—between the theoretical debates described earlier and actual classroom practice—Gudykunst *et al.*’s review of hitherto available teaching resources and techniques provides a useful foundation for instructors. One resource that is missing in their review, however, is the students themselves. Much of the recent literature advocates for integration of activities that foster purposeful interaction between local and international students (Eisenclas & Trevaskes, 2007; Moore & Hampton, 2015) and the wider community beyond the university, for instance, through “service learning” tasks partnering students and community organisations (Blithe, 2016).

In addition, ICC instructors may also want to explore other so-called authentic resources with the potential to tap into the affective dimension of intercultural learning. Apart from audio and video resources readily available online, such as images, songs, podcasts and YouTube videos from around the world, instructors could also explore written resources that may allow them to integrate a first-person, subjective relationship to the world. Examples of this may include transcultural/translingual “migratory” autobiographies (fiction and non-fiction); language learning memoirs; oral history accounts featuring, for instance, intergenerational interaction in migrant families; and migrant blogs. Using this type of autobiographical/testimonial genre may provide a suitable first-person perspective into intercultural interactions and *promote* in-class intercultural dialogue. Indeed, these resources can introduce a third person’s *emic* perspective that can be unpacked and problematised within the safety of the classroom environment. By third person we mean, other than teacher and the student. In addition, the personal, individual nature of such first-person accounts has the potential to increase the level of students’ affective engagement that may lead to instances of cognitive dissonance, a key aspect in the intercultural learning process. If not unpacked adequately this type of “autobiographical” reference has the caveat of reinforcing rather than demystifying stereotypes. This is also the case when learners share their own personal experiences in class, instances that are increasingly more common given the diverse nature of backgrounds and experiences in today’s university classroom. Here, the tension lies between engaging personal, idiosyncratic experiences as a way of illustrating the dynamic nature of intercultural communication, and ensuring that the views expressed in these accounts do not offend others and do not perpetuate stereotypical views. Balancing the tension between these two forces is not an easy task and requires conscious training and experimentation in class.

Finally, in this concluding section, Gudykunst *et al.* also claim that “the most important skill that needs to be addressed in intercultural courses is becoming *mindful*” (p. 283, emphasis added). While they refer to it as a *skill* rather than a habit of mind, Gudykunst *et al.* rely on psychologist Ellen Langer’s three qualities of mindfulness to link its relevance in intercultural encounters. These qualities are: “(1) the creation of new categories; (2) openness to new information; and (3) awareness of more than one perspective” (Langer, 1989, p. 62). While these qualities may be applicable to other skills, they echo various features of intercultural competence/awareness conceptual models that have emerged in the

last few years in both the ICC and the MFL education fields (Byram, 2009; Nodulman, Forthcoming, 2019; Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009). Furthermore, these qualities also relate to empirical findings focused on first-year students' experiences of intercultural learning inside the classroom (Lee, Williams, Shaw, & Jie, 2014). These findings revealed that "in terms of students engaging in intercultural interactions in classrooms, mindfulness is displayed in asking oneself such questions as "How are we reacting to each other?" or "What can I say or do to help in this process?" (p. 549). In Lee *et al.*'s study, participating students reported that being mindful of others enabled them to regulate and adjust their own behaviour and reactions. Students also highlighted how mindfulness helped them enhance the practice of active listening, focusing on the interlocutor, not thinking about what or how they would reply but simply engaging actively as listeners (pp. 545-546). Here, connections made between the fields of psychology, ICC and MFL education provide fertile ground for a renewed understanding of the dynamics of human interaction that incorporate questioning of one's reactions in the negotiation of meaning.

### Implications for the ICC Field and Beyond

While the literature reviewed here provides a suitable starting point for the design and development of an introductory ICC course, it is by no means intended as one-size-fits-all prescriptive guide. Alternatively, we argue that research into context-sensitive pedagogies grounded in grassroots-level involvement of stakeholders across the board is necessary to complement these discussions. With respect to the development of learning objectives, for instance, further research on students' perspectives may provide important insights (cf. Kvam *et al.*, 2018). Recent studies suggest that students' voices regarding what it means to be "interculturally competent" and the traits that this may require, do not necessarily match pedagogical endeavours (Lee *et al.*, 2014).

The gap between theoretical advances and actual classroom practice also remains to be addressed in future research. This methodological gap may be bridged by classroom-based research. Indeed, in spite of instructors' reflection and deliberate pedagogical choices, it could be argued that, as Lee *et al.* point out "even the most careful course design is only the prologue to a messy classroom reality" (2012, p. 83). Young and Sachdev's (2011) study on British and American private language school teachers' beliefs highlights teachers' concern with being able to create a "safe, generally calm and unthreatening atmosphere" in class as "you cannot have both controversy and sensitivity in the classroom" (p. 89). In contrast, as part of our needs analysis research project, interviewed language teaching academics tended to note the need for language learners to have stereotypes challenged, and to be made aware of "uncomfortable" aspects of intercultural communication. These tensions point to the need for additional research into what the intercultural learning process looks like in practice and into teachers' and learners' willingness to negotiate the complexities of these "messy" classroom realities (cf. Y.-W. Chen & Lawless, 2018). Some steps in this direction have been taken by Trees, Kerssen-Griep and Hess in their studies on instructional *facework*, that is, on the communication strategies used to negotiate, sustain and/or restore interactants' preferred social identities inside the classroom and, in particular, how such strategies may enhance the reception and integration of feedback, decreasing students' defensiveness about suggested corrections (see, for example, Kerssen-Griep, Trees, & Hess, 2008; Trees, Kerssen-Griep, & Hess, 2009). Given the preceding discussion on pedagogical issues facing ICC and MFL instructors, developing skilled instructional *facework* appears to hold the key to "increasing students' willingness and ability to be influenced by their teachers, as well as enhancing students' ability to internalise and use their teachers' evaluative advice" (Trees *et al.*, 2009, p. 412).

Additional research on the current status of the ICC course at an international level is required. Demographic data on instructors, students enrolled, course outlines, teaching modes and resources would provide a more concrete picture of the current state of play. While this paper has concentrated

on the design and development of an introductory course at undergraduate level, additional research into more advanced offerings of ICC courses at postgraduate level may provide a more balanced perspective on the pedagogical design of such courses (see, for example, Puntaney, 2016, critical reflections on the development of ICC courses at postgraduate level). In particular, the hands-on research-related aspects of ICC which concern students' conducting various types of fieldwork research as part of their (undergraduate) coursework. Indeed, bearing in mind current philosophical debates in the field, it is important to consider a pedagogically responsive approach to the development of ICC-related research skills (Zhu, 2016b). Furthermore, given the "superdiverse" (Vertovec, 2007), multilingual nature of daily interaction, and, by extension, of research contexts, it is imperative that (future) researchers consider their own positionality and intentionality underlying linguistic choices in overall research design, collection, coding and analysis of data. As underlined by Holmes (2017, p. 91), it is imperative to consider "how researchers draw on linguistic resources (their own and others') in these multilingual contexts, how they negotiate intercultural relationships and communication in the research site, and the ethical processes such a multilingual, intercultural focus entails".

Overall, apart from considering each of the issues and suggested parameters, what clearly emerges as a guiding principle is *constructive alignment* (Biggs & Tang, 2011). In other words, it is important that the design of the newly conceptualised ICC course strives for alignment among its many elements, philosophical and pedagogical, in order to avoid neo-essentialist trends (Holliday, 2011) and what Dervin refers to as the Janusian approach to the intercultural. The latter refers to instances whereby intercultural researchers and educators conflate or oscillate between so-called "liquid" and "solid" approaches to the intercultural, that is, espousing, on the one hand the changeability and unstable nature of cultures and identities, while simultaneously analysing and categorising study participants/interactants according to national, religious and ethnic groups (Dervin, 2009).

Finally, it is important to acknowledge that the introductory ICC course is an educational artefact in itself. It is only one of the many avenues through which to address intercultural learning in undergraduate degrees, and as such, it addresses only partially what should be a comprehensively integrated across-the-curriculum and institution-wide endeavour (Wahl, Williams, Berkos, & Disbrow, 2016). As highlighted by Lee *et al.*, "any course can engage students in interactions that stimulate the cognitive and relational work that is fundamental to the development of intercultural competences" (2012, p. 83), and yet, no single course, syllabus or program of studies can claim to thoroughly address the complexities of intercultural learning. Nevertheless, if designed and developed following the parameters discussed here, a compulsory introductory ICC course may provide the potential for greater integration with relevant programs such as language majors. This would, in turn, require strong organisational commitment from HE institutions, for instance, in the form of centralised policies regarding institutional engagement with diversity and intercultural learning as well as academic training and continuous professional development of ICC and MFL instructors (Gregersen-Hermans, 2016).

It can thus be concluded that we face multiple challenges and constraints in our personal and situated contexts as interculturalists: discipline-based, institution, department, teaching team and even learners' own set of beliefs and assumptions as they cross the threshold of the classroom door. Yet, given the current state of the world we live in, rife with conflict and inequality, a state that has been normalised, and often legitimised as the inevitable nature of our human condition, there has arguably never been a greater need to address the development of our students' intercultural capabilities.

### **Concluding Remarks**

In their 1991 article “*Taming the beast*,” Gudykunst *et al.* provided a template-like outline of suggestions regarding “the major issues” instructors must face in designing and delivering an introductory ICC course. Many of these issues remain critically relevant today. While Gudykunst *et al.* did not elaborate on the metaphorical characterisation of the ICC course as a “beast” it is not difficult to see why they chose it. Over twenty-five years later, we could ask the question “*Can the beast [truly] be tamed?*” Following our critical appraisal of the current state of the field, the answer could perhaps be that we are now dealing with a whole *new* beast and that perhaps we do not need to tame it but rather embrace its wild nature and run with it. Moreover, perhaps we need to *resist* the need to “tame” it, to provide one-size-fits all solutions; instead, we need to (re)imagine it by embracing complexity and providing nuanced, pedagogical responses situated within specific contextual parameters. This will be increasingly important given the proliferation of ICC courses a key sites for engaging with diversity in universities around the world.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> While discussing origins and definitions of the “intercultural competence” construct falls beyond the scope of this paper, we acknowledge that its definition remains highly contested in both ICC and MFL fields (Rathje, 2007; Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009). It is interesting to note, nevertheless, that this construct emerged in the US in the late 1970s around the same time as ICC courses (see, for instance, Hammer, Gudykunst, & Wiseman, 1978).

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