Intercultural communication within the common education space: problems and perspectives

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*Welcome speech for the 3rd international
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The Current State of Affairs

- world shaped by societal and civilisational changes
- What was once considered to be the norm has been put to the test by globalisation, information accessibility, and technological advancements.
- These changes result in bringing together different nationalities, ethnicities, and cultures.
- instead of travelling for months or days you can reach any part of the globe in hours
- Local businesses have expanded globally thanks to advances in technology and the internet.
- communication has shifted from face-to-face or epistolary communication to telegraph, phone and finally the internet
- asynchronous or synchronous means of communication

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- The variety of cultures and languages we can be exposed to today is also reflected in geopolitical fluctuations, migrations, and mobility of not only goods, but also people.
- the fast spread of scientific knowledge and information
- exposure to different scientific paradigms and approaches
- coming together of different aspects of human and scientific endeavours that enrich us and push the development of humanity forward
- Scientific research is now global, and we can access works on any given subject and read about disappearing languages like Ainu in Japan or about the shift of the quality of vowels in Canada.

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Communication and Culture

- culture implies shared beliefs, norms, values, customs, and behaviours that shape the way we perceive the world around us and influence our actions
- these concepts are connected to speech communities, discourse communities, communities of practice, and online or virtual communities
- we can expand our notion of culture and add differences that include national, local, regional and ethnic groups, religious belief, gender, age, etc.

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Diversity

- In the multicultural and multilingual world, communities can be diverse
- In a medical discourse community one can encounter a doctor from one culture, a patient from another and the interpreter form a culture different to both the doctor and the patient
- In communities of practice there can be several people from different cultures bound together by the same interest, identification with the group or common passion for the goal
- In online or virtual communities, the range of different languages and cultures is boundless.
- E.g., online communities based on conlangs or fictional constructed languages and fictional cultures (e.g., Klingon from Star trek or Elvish from Lord of the Rings)

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Intercultural communication

- Intercultural communication studies how people belonging to different cultures share meanings, whether through verbal or nonverbal means, and how culture affects communication.
- From a linguistic point of view, intercultural communication can be studied through many different lenses through employing different subfields of linguistics to shed light on particular phenomena.

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- sociolinguistics can provide us with insights from culture and language contact such as code-switching
- pragmatics can provide us with insights about adherence to politeness, i.e. face threatening/face saving acts between members of different cultures
- genre analysis can shed light on professional and occupational cultures
- critical discourse analysis can examine attitudes, values and stereotypes
- computer-mediated-communication can inform us about phenomena such as flaming and netiquette
- conversation analysis can tell us more about miscommunication in instances where English is used as lingua franca.

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Conclusion

- These insights can help us better understand this complex phenomenon as well as its importance for today's multicultural and multilingual world.
- Furthermore, as educators we have the responsibility to convey all that we have learnt to our students by developing their intercultural awareness, competence, and skills.
- This can range from teaching them formulaic language, email writing, genre specific elements of language, to specialised terminology and jargon, but also teaching them about the world, diversity and humanity.
- Whether we are educators and teach general language, language for specific purposes or linguistics it is our duty to prepare our students for this everchanging world.
- Finally, as scientist we have a duty to try and unravel the mysteries before us and explain the world around us.

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