# Intercultural Communicative Competence and Individual Differences
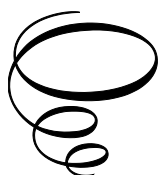
# Intercultural Communicative Competence and Individual Differences:

## *A Model for Advanced EFL Learners*

By

## Judit Dombi

**Cambridge**
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Publishing

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*In memory of Soma*

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

# LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS, TABLES, FIGURES, AND APPENDICES

## List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

| | |
|---|---|
| CA | communication apprehension |
| CC | communicative competence |
| CEFR | Common European Framework of Reference for Languages |
| CLT | communicative language teaching |
| EFL | English as a foreign language |
| ELT | English language teaching |
| FL | foreign language |
| FLT | foreign language teaching |
| FQ | final questionnaire |
| IC | intercultural competence |
| ICC | intercultural communicative competence |
| ICO | intercultural contact (variable) |
| IS | intercultural speaker |
| L1 | first language/mother tongue |
| L2 | second language |
| MLANG | multilingualism (variable) |
| MOT | motivation (variable) |
| NS | native speaker |
| PQ | pilot questionnaire |
| SA | study abroad |

| SEM | structural equation modeling |
| SLA | second language acquisition |
| SPCC | self-perceived communication competence |
| TA | time spent abroad (variable) |
| TL | target language |
| WTC | willingness to communicate |

# List of Figures

# List of Tables

# List of Appendices

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# Chapter One

# Introduction:
## An Overview of the Book

This introduction outlines how and why the need emerged to conduct the research project presented in this book. Never has it been more difficult to account for phenomena such as intercultural interactions and language use than nowadays, when, as a result of societal changes, culture, communication and language use have become even more fluid, complex and dynamically changing constructs. Research in second language acquisition (SLA) and English language education has shifted towards a wider conceptualization of second language (L2) learning. Part of this is what has been termed a *social turn* in SLA, emphasizing the role of culture, context and socialization in L2 learning (Duff, 2019). Learning a new language goes way beyond learning about the target language; it involves not only learners' cognitive, but also emotional functioning as well as the social context in which the language activity is embedded.

Globalization and the rapid progress of information and communication technologies have brought enormous advances to humanity; however, the challenges imposed by this changing world are many. Individuals all over the world have to find their place in pluralistic societies that comprise people of different cultural and language backgrounds, representing various traditions, nationalities, and religions. Understanding language use in relation to diverse social phenomena is a particularly important imperative. In the current climate of rapidly changing societies, when the issues of migration and immigration have become more politicized than ever before, it is inevitable to examine the intercultural dimension of language teaching and learning.

In response to this need, competences required for successful intercultural communication (defined in multiple ways, as will be discussed in the book) have become a key issue in discourses on foreign language education in Europe and beyond, and their development is considered an educational priority (Fantini, 2009). As Risager posits, "all language teaching must

transcend the traditional national paradigm of one nation, one language, one culture" (2016, p. 48).

This shift is embedded in an overall reform of general educational policies in Europe: the introduction of a competence-based approach. In 2006, the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union adopted the Recommendation on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning (2006/962/EC) to ensure that citizens of the member states develop a broad set of skills from early on in education which was hoped to transfer Europe's human capital to be more competitive in the global arena. Key competences are a dynamic combination of the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that all learners develop from early on in education throughout life, within the educational context and beyond. In 2017 the European Commission initiated a consultation to revise the 2006 Key Competences, and the results were made public in 2018. Table 1 presents the Key Competences of both documents.

**Table 1**
*A Comparison of Key Competences*

| KEY COMPETENCES 2006 | KEY COMPETENCES 2018 |
| --- | --- |
| Communication in the mother tongue | Literacy competence |
| Communication in foreign languages | Multilingual competence |
| Mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology | Mathematical competence and competence in science, technology, and engineering |
| Digital competence | Digital competence |
| Learning to learn | Personal, social and learning to learn competence |
| Social and civic competences | Citizenship competence |
| Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship | Entrepreneurship competence |
| Cultural awareness and expression | Cultural awareness and expression competence |

Minor changes were made in the terminology. Foreign language competence was renamed, most probably to reflect the multicultural, multilingual fluidity across national borders that have characterized Europe in recent years. However, its content-specification did not change substantially. It offers a broad description of the competence and explicitly states that

language competence should integrate intercultural competence, an idea that the 2006 document also emphasized. In line with these principles, most European countries have included intercultural objectives in their foreign language teaching curricula, albeit often vaguely defined ones (Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009).

There are various terms used in the literature to describe the complex of competences required of an individual to interact effectively and appropriately with linguistically and culturally different others (Fantini, 2006). In this book, I will adopt the term intercultural communicative competence (ICC) proposed by Michael Byram to be used in a foreign language teaching (FLT) framework. I decided to adhere to this term for various reasons: it has an emphasis on the linguistic aspects of intercultural communication, and it links the construct to communicative competence and thus it "deliberately maintains a link with recent traditions in foreign language learning" (Byram, 1997, p. 3). Moreover, it is the most widely used term in the discourse on the intercultural dimension of language education in Europe.

In intercultural situations, communicative competence in the foreign language, i.e., knowing how to interact accurately and appropriately, would not necessarily guarantee fruitful cooperation and cultural synergies. Conscientious language teaching should help students optimize rather than merely "survive" intercultural encounters. It is essential for learners to be equipped with intercultural competence and means of critically reflecting on various social and cultural processes, hence the introduction of the construct of intercultural communicative competence (Byram, 1997).

There is, however, no reference as to how this desired outcome can be achieved in public education, and throughout lifelong learning. This raises several questions: How do language learners eventually cope in situations in which people of different cultural and linguistic backgrounds are involved? What helps and what hinders their success in such cases? What factors influence their performance as foreign language learners? What may be the sources of variation in the development of ICC? What individual characteristics can differentiate between successful and unsuccessful intercultural performances? How can teachers of foreign languages (FL) better foster learners' development as intercultural language users? How can teacher education integrate this dimension of language teaching and learning to prepare pre-service teachers for their job? These questions have motivated the study presented in this book and served as the rationale for designing and implementing it.

Possible ways of developing ICC can be designed once the characteristics of the learner interacting with it are mapped. This book aims to understand

Hungarian English majors' ICC in interactional contexts and to explore the factors influencing it. The main idea underlying the research project was triggered by my interest in individual differences and language learning: how do certain individual difference variables influence the way language learners behave and interact in intercultural situations?

The traditional understanding of individual difference (ID) variables as relatively stable was challenged by Dörnyei (2009), who advanced the idea that ID variables need to be reconsidered as situated in context and dynamically interacting. The present study fits in this more holistic and situated (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015) understanding of individual differences and aims to find out how they are related to ICC. This is done by overviewing the literature and presenting and discussing findings of a large-scale longitudinal quantitative study conducted at the Institute of English Studies at the University of Pécs in Hungary. After critically overviewing the relevant literature, I aim to build and test a model of learners' ICC in relation to other learner characteristics, such as motivation, attitudes, anxiety, and willingness to communicate.

The study aims to address the following research questions:

**RQ1**    What characterizes participants' ICC profiles?

**RQ2**    What characterizes participants in terms of motivation, WTC, SPCC, CA and frequency of intercultural contact?

**RQ3**    How do communication-related ID variables (CA, WTC, SPCC) interact with learners' ICC?

**RQ4**    How do motivational and contextual factors (MOT, ICO) interact with with learners' ICC?

**RQ5**    Which individual characteristics best differentiate high level of ICC?

**RQ6**    How can the relationship between ICC and ID variables be modeled?

**RQ7**    To what extent does the dataset support the proposed model of learners' ICC?

The book is structured as follows. Chapter One gives a general overview of the main ideas presented in the book. Chapter Two covers the theoretical underpinnings of the empirical study in six parts. Section 2.1 introduces the chapter, Section 2.2 looks into how ICC has been conceptualized by dismantling the term and defining it in relation to intercultural competence and communicative competence. It overviews models of these constructs and clarifies how they are interpreted and used in this study. It includes a

critical overview of Byram's model of ICC. Section 2.3 analyses and discusses milestones in empirical research on the development and assessment of ICC in various contexts. Section 2.4 presents research on individual variables related to L2 communication, Section 2.5 summarizes an earlier attempt to integrate ICC and individual differences related to communication and conclusions are offered in Section 2.6.

Chapter Three aims to contextualize the study and to outline its research design. Section 3.1 offers an introduction, Section 3.2 presents the context in which the empirical study was conducted; then the research questions are presented, and information is shared on the participants (Sections 3.3-3.4). The step-by-step procedures of how the data collection instruments were developed, including their construction, validation, and piloting, are presented in Section 3.5. Section 3.6 details the measures that were taken to ensure that the quality criteria of validity and reliability were met, whereas Section 3.7 outlines the phases of data collection. Conclusions are drawn in Section 3.8.

Chapter Four presents a large-scale questionnaire study implemented in six phases of data collection. Participants were a total of 379 first-year BA students and pre-service teacher trainees at the University of Pécs, over a period of three academic years. The study draws partly on the instruments and findings of a previous study conducted by Dombi (2013). For an overview of the structure of the research project, see Table 2.

**Table 2**
*Structure of the Research Project*

| Study | Participants | Date |
|---|---|---|
| Pilot study 1 | N=32 | 2013 |
| Preliminary study (Dombi, 2013) | N=105 | 2013 |
| Pilot study 2 (modified instrument) | N=100 | 2016 |
| Main study (conducted in 6 phases) | N=379 | October, 2016-March, 2019 |

Section 4.1 introduces the main study, Section 4.2 presents participants' self-reported ICC and their results on the individual variables scales, thus displaying an overall picture of participants' communicative behavior, their self-perceived language competence, their motifs, and fears about

communicating in English. Results were obtained using descriptive statistics and correlations. The analysis revealed significant relationships between communication-related variables and ICC: self-perceived communication competence and communication apprehension were found to be the most closely related to ICC. Moreover, motivation and frequency of intercultural contact were also found to correlate with ICC significantly, albeit to a lesser degree.

One of the aims of the study was to build and test a model that adequately presents advanced EFL learners' ICC in relation to ID variables, which is theoretically sound and based on empirical evidence, this is presented in Section 4.3. The final model that was found to fit the data indicates that students' intercultural communicative competence is influenced by multiple individual difference variables: communication-related individual differences (communication apprehension and self-perceived communication competence), an affective variable related to language learning (motivation), and contextual differences (time spent abroad and multilingualism). In addition to these, further variables exerting an indirect influence on ICC through mediating variables include participants' willingness to communicate and the frequency of their direct intercultural contacts.

Section 4.3 also discusses practical implications of the findings. They suggest that participants' self-assessment of their own performance and their apprehension in communication situations directly impact their intercultural communicative competence. This outcome has important implications for practicing teachers as well as decision-makers involved in language education policy. The desired outcome of foreign language teaching, speakers who are competent in intercultural interactions, is not merely the result of intercultural education and teaching that develops communicative competence. In addition to these, learners' feelings, fears, beliefs and perceptions of themselves also have to be taken into consideration and worked upon. Learners and their teachers need to be aware of the extent and the ways in which these factors influence the outcomes of intercultural interactions.

The study presented in Chapter Four lays no claim to generalize findings to all English language learners' ICC. The construct of ICC is so complex and multi-faceted that it needs to be viewed as embedded in context. Therefore, replication studies are encouraged to provide more insight into how ICC may be affected by individual difference variables in different local contexts.

Chapter Five concludes the study by generally highlighting the need to assign priority to various learner characteristics influencing L2

communication, most importantly L2 communication apprehension and self-perceived L2communication competence (Section 5.1) In Section 5.2 implications for teaching and curriculum design are outlined, and Section 5.3 discusses limitations of the study together with possible directions for future research. This section suggests ideas on how the data collection instruments may be altered to be used with other foreign language learners. Replication research is invaluable in quantitative experimental studies in applied linguistics (Porte, 2012) and they are needed to find out how models developed and tested in one context work in others. The last section offers ideas on how to adapt the data collection instruments to be applicable in various settings with diverse learners, and how to conduct replication studies contributing to a more detailed comprehension of ICC and individual difference variables in new contexts.

# CHAPTER TWO

# INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE (ICC) AND INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES IN SECOND LANGUAGE (L2) COMMUNICATION

## 2.1. Introduction

The study presented in this book draws on various theoretical constructs introduced in detail in this chapter. Section 2.2 covers theoretical conceptualizations of intercultural communicative competence (ICC) by critically analyzing the term and presenting the broad framework of intercultural communication as well as the constructs of intercultural competence and communicative competence. This is followed by the description of the intercultural speaker as the desired model in FLT and the presentation of Byram's model of ICC and its criticism. Section 2.3 overviews empirical research on ICC development and assessment in diverse contexts. The innovative model proposed in this book is different from previous models on ICC as it emphasizes language learners' personal characteristics impacting their communication. These personal characteristics, also called individual differences (IDs), are outlined in Section 2.4, whereas Section 2.5 presents my first attempt (Dombi, 2013) of integrating ICC and IDs.

## 2.2 Conceptualizing ICC

Recent trends in applied linguistics have recognized the need to examine the intercultural dimension of language teaching and learning with a special focus on social, cultural and political aspects of language use (Duff & May, 2017). Recently, experts' views have shifted from focusing on native speakers as norms to emphasizing that language teaching should not aim for students achieving native-like proficiency (Byram, 1997; Seidlhofer, 2004; Widdowson, 1994). Students should be endowed with knowledge, skills,

and attitudes (Byram, 1997) necessary to function in diverse cultural contexts (Byram, 1997; Byram & Fleming, 1998; Jaeger, 2001; Kramsch, 2001).

Proficiency in a foreign language has been acknowledged to comprise an intercultural dimension, so much so that even the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (*CEFR*, Council of Europe, 2001, pp. 103-105) lists intercultural awareness and intercultural skills and know-how under the general competences learners need to attain. Also, the implications of interculturality for curriculum design in relation to the *CEFR* are outlined comprehensively in a more recent Council of Europe publication, the *Guide for the Development and Implementation of Curricula for Plurilingual and Intercultural Education* (Baecco et al., 2016).

This intercultural dimension is reflected in several EU language policy documents and also in language policies of the member states. The term widely used to refer to what is needed for success in such encounters is intercultural communicative competence (ICC). Byram (1997) coined the term ICC and defined it as the "individual's ability to communicate and interact across cultural boundaries" (p. 7). In a more recent conceptualization, Fantini (2019) described ICC as the "complex of abilities needed to perform effectively and appropriately when interacting with others who are linguistically and culturally different from oneself" (2019, p. 34). A range of terms have been used to refer to this complex construct over the years: for example, intercultural communication competence (Ting-Toomey, 1993), intercultural sensitivity (Bennett, 2004), intercultural competence (Fantini, 2007), global competence (Cushner & Brennan, 2007), and intercultural interaction competence (ICIC) (Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009). Empirical investigations and theoretical discussions have resulted in numerous frameworks across the disciplines of psychology (e.g., Bennett, 1993), communication studies (e.g., Gudykunst, 2004; Ting-Toomey, 1999), and applied linguistics (e.g., Byram, 1997; Deardorff, 2006; Risager, 2007) with diverse components labeled differently and attributing importance to foci that are related to the academic disciplines in which the study is embedded (see Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009 for a discipline-based overview).

Given the multi-faceted nature of the construct, it is not surprising that conceptualizations differ across disciplines. Some authors considered ICC as bound to interaction and language use (Byram, 1997; Risager, 2007), others emphasized its developmental nature (e.g., Bennett, 1993), whereas other authors examined it in relation to sojourn (Fantini, 2007; 2019) or

within a framework of communication emphasizing its interpersonal dimension (Arasaratnam, 2009; Gudykunst, 2004).

All these conceptualizations share some common ground: (1) emphasis on effective and appropriate communication in intercultural encounters (Fantini, 2019; Spitzberg, 1988; Spitzberg & Cupach, 1984) and (2) the idea that ICC comprises cognitive, behavioral and affective dimensions (e.g., Arasaratnam, 2006; Bandura & Sercu, 2005; Byram & Fleming, 1998; Byram et al., 2001; Fowler & Mumford, 1999).

The term ICC as defined by Byram (1997) integrates two competences: intercultural competence and communicative competence. The purpose of the next sections is to make ICC as understood in FLT contexts more transparent: this is done by guiding the reader through the evolution of these competences. First, intercultural communication is discussed to pave the way to the presentation of intercultural competence and communicative competence. Then, the idea of the intercultural speaker is elaborated on, followed by the outline of Byram's model of ICC and its critiques.

### 2.2.1. Intercultural communication

Intercultural communication as a discipline dates back to the mid-twentieth century: after World War II the U.S. Foreign Service employees realized that although they had received foreign language training, it did not equip them with means of effectively communicating in their missions overseas (Martin & Nakayama, 2010). To address this need, the U.S. Foreign Service Institute was established to develop trainings for Foreign Service workers, led by a renowned crew including the anthropologist Edward T. Hall, who is seen as the founder of the field of intercultural communication (Ikas & Wagner, 2009; Kramsch, 2001; Rogers et al., 2002). Pinto (2000, p. 13) overviewed a number of theoretical and empirical works to show that the literature on intercultural communication has been steadily growing since as early as the 1960s. Early researchers referred to it as 'linguistics across cultures' (Lado, 1957), 'cross-cultural communication' (Kaplan, 1961; Lado, 1961) and research of communication 'penetrating boundaries' (Oliver, 1962).

Here is an example of how the term intercultural communication used to be defined. In a reader published in 1988, Samovar and Porter assumed that intercultural communication occurs whenever a sender is a member of one culture and a receiver is a member of another (1988, p. 15). This definition is crucial for two reasons: first, it clearly echoes the interpersonal approach introduced by Hall in his 1959 book *The Silent Language* where intercultural communication is very loosely defined as communication

between *members* of different cultures. The second reason why I chose Samovar and Porter's definition is that they edited a new reader in 2009 in collaboration with McDaniels, and used a very similar definition stating that 'intercultural communication occurs whenever a person from one culture sends a message to be processed by a person from a different culture' (Samovar et al., 2009, p. 8). The two decades that passed between the publications of the two readers (Samovar & Porter, 1988; and Samovar et al., 2009) witnessed a growing interest in intercultural communication and resulted in an abundance of theoretical and empirical research. Some scholars have argued against the predominance of the interpersonal approach in this field (e.g., Gudykunst, 2003; Pinto, 2000). They assumed that as culture is socially acquired knowledge, it is more reasonable to recognize that intercultural communication works on different levels involving not only individuals, but also groups of individuals, and to view it as the exchange of symbolic information between well-defined groups with significantly different cultures (Barnett & Lee, 2003, p. 264). Despite attempts to broaden the scope of levels on which this type of communication operates, the literature suggests that the interpersonal approach is still predominant (Chuang, 2004; Piller, 2000; Spitzberg, 1988; Zaharna, 2009).

The most important concern in connection with definitions is clearly pointed out by Lin Ma (2004): they fail to make evident what the concept actually denotes: '[a]lthough the expression 'intercultural communication' frequently appears in a wide range of scholarly writings, its meaning remains either vacuous or inscrutable' (2004, no page). The definitions of the construct discussed in this section highlight that its conceptualization is unclear: definitions are circular and offer no additional meaning apart from what the name implies. They are based on the equivalence: 'intercultural communication'=communication between cultures, mostly, though not exclusively, at the level of individuals.

Thus, the question of how to define 'culture' and 'communication' remains, and the understanding of IC lies fundamentally in how these concepts are circumscribed. In a second language research context, which views culture as bound with language in multiple and complex ways (Ellis, 1994; Gardner, 1985; Kramsch, 1998a) it would be reasonable to distinguish between cultures based on their language use. It must be noted, though, that this somewhat limited differentiation is just one of many.

Second language acquisition (SLA) theories have stressed the importance of communication in learners' development (e.g., Canale & Swain, 1980; Gass, 1997; Savignon, 1991). In Kramsch's view, the main aim of English language teaching has always been the facilitation of communication between people not sharing the same language and national culture (2001,

p. 201). Foreign language teachers have been teaching various bits of the target culture along with the target language (TL) in the classrooms, and the distinction between *big C* culture (arts, literature, history,) and *small c* culture (behavior, norms, values) became popular (Risager, 2007). Linking language and culture in an educationally relevant way is essential, as the *small c* culture of attitudes, mind-sets and interactional styles is a key to successful communication in EFL (Kramsch, 2001, p. 204). Consequently, preparing language learners to function as competent intercultural speakers (Byram, 1997; Kramsch, 2001) is a goal set for stakeholders of language education.

## 2.2.2. Intercultural competence

Intercultural competence is a prevailing term among the plethora of others used by researchers to describe the complex of cognitive, affective and behavioral components (Deardorf, 2009) that make individuals able to function in intercultural situations effectively. Intercultural competence was defined by Spitzberg and Chagnon (2009) as 'the appropriate and effective management of interaction between people who, to some degree or another, represent different or divergent affective, cognitive, and behavioral orientations to the world' (p. 7). This definition touches on a long history of intercultural competence being associated with effectiveness and appropriateness. Several studies explored how individuals cope in intercultural situations, and they view intercultural competence as a combination of two aspects: (1) personal abilities, e.g., mindfulness (Gudykunst, 1993) positive attitudes towards other cultures (Arasaratnam & Doerfel, 2005), adaptability (Matsumoto et al., 2003) and (2) contextual variables, (e.g., shared goals of interactants, relationship between interactants). Some studies were concerned with adjustment, assimilation, and adaptation (Spitzberg & Changon, 2009) and focused on social psychology (see Matsumoto, et al., 2001; Matsumoto et al., 2003; Matsumoto et al., 2004; Matsumoto et al., 2007). They examined whether and how psychological skills integrate into a dimension accounting for intercultural adjustment.

Hammer, Bennett, and Wiseman (2003) distinguished 'intercultural sensitivity' from 'intercultural competence' and defined the former as "the ability to discriminate and experience relevant cultural differences" and the latter as "the ability to think and act in interculturally appropriate ways" (p. 422). This distinction draws on Bennett's (1986, 1993) understanding of intercultural sensitivity as a developmental concept involving stages of progression that the individual may go through from a more ethnocentric to

a more ethnorelative worldview. The former is characterized by cultural difference being experienced as a threat, whereas the latter presupposes cultures as relative to context. The underlying assumption of Bennett's model (1986, 1993) is that as individuals' perception of cultural difference becomes more complex, their experience of culture becomes more differentiated and their competence in intercultural relations increases. Thus, intercultural competence is more performance-related as it involves an interactional element that intercultural sensitivity clearly lacks (Hammer et al., 2003).

It must be highlighted that most models of intercultural competence do not identify language proficiency as a key constituent, although some theories point to its importance (e.g., Fantini, 1995; 2009; 2019). For a detailed review of intercultural competence models relevant for communication studies and social psychology, see Spitzberg and Chagnon (2009), whereas models relevant for business studies and psychology are discussed by Spencer-Oatey and Franklin (2009).

Arasaratnam (2016) notes that in communication literature, the terms intercultural competence and intercultural communication competence are used interchangeably. The term intercultural communication competence, although very similar to intercultural communicative competence, is yet another term that adds to the perplexing challenge of identifying what these terms mean, and how (if at all) they differ from one another. In my understanding, a logical distinction between these two terms traces back to how the constructs of communication competence and communicative competence have been conceptualized in different academic traditions.

The definitions of communication competence stem from the fields of communication studies and psychology (e.g., Duran & Spitzberg, 1995; Spitzberg, 1988; Spitzberg & Cupach, 1984, Wiseman, 2001, Gudykunst, 2004; Ting-Toomey, 1993) and they tend to emphasize two criteria in communication: (1) effectiveness and (2) appropriateness. In Spitzberg and Cupach's (1984) definition, communication competence is the ability to choose a communication behavior that is both appropriate and effective in a given situation. In a later study, Spitzberg refined this definition and described competent communication as an "interaction that is perceived as effective in fulfilling certain rewarding objectives in a way that is also appropriate to the context in which the interaction occurs" (1988, p. 68).

Wiseman (2001) defined intercultural communication competence as the competence involving the knowledge, motivation, and skills needed to interact effectively and appropriately with members of different cultures, clearly echoing the Spitzbergian definition amended by a reference to intercultural encounters. Studies on intercultural communication competence

conducted in the field of communication studies (e.g., Arasaratnam, 2009; Beamer, 1992; Kupka et al., 2007; Spitzberg, 2000) view people engaged in communication as *interactants* and focus on whether and how communication is effective and appropriate.

In applied linguistics, there is a long tradition of how communicative competence is defined; this will be outlined in the next section. In my view, scholars using the term intercultural communicative competence emphasize this tradition and highlight communication in a foreign language as a crucial point in intercultural encounters. Studies on intercultural communicative competence (e.g., Byram, 1997; Byram & Flemming, 1998; Kramsch, 2010) view the parties of communication as *language learners/users* and research how appropriate their utterances are in specific intercultural contexts.

### 2.2.3. Communicative competence

This section aims to outline the most important contributions to studies on competence in the fields of linguistics and applied linguistics. The construct of competence has evolved in the past five decades from the narrow Chomskyan (1965) understanding of linguistic competence as native speakers' intrinsic knowledge about the language into different comprehensive and stratified models of communicative competence (CC) comprising multiple competences, knowledges, and skills. These contributions are important milestones in applied linguistics and by fueling the advance of communicative language teaching they have had a lasting impact on FLT as well.

The notion of competence was introduced by the American generative linguist Noam Chomsky as he differentiated between *competence* and *performance* (1965). This distinction, in fact, echoes the Saussurean idea of *langue* and *parole* (1983 [1916]), the former denoting the whole system of language that makes speech possible, the latter referring to the concrete use of language, the actual speech act. However, Chomsky stated that the structuralist notion of langue as a mere systematic inventory was not appropriate, as it was static and did not include linguistic creativity (Chomsky, 1964; 1965).

In the Chomskyan (1964, 1965, 1968, 1975) taxonomy competence, the knowledge of the language, is distinguished from performance, the use of the language. Chomsky (1965) defined competence as intrinsic linguistic knowledge of a language possessed by its native speakers that enables them to produce and understand an indefinite number of utterances and to judge the grammaticality of utterances intuitively. Thus, in this sense, competence

is the underlying knowledge of the language that the speaker has internalized. However, as Chomsky notes, natural speech shows deviations from rules, and thus, competence can be directly reflected in actual performance only in idealized circumstances. This assumption gave rise to far-reaching debates on competence in linguistics.

In 1972 the American sociolinguist Dell Hymes challenged Chomsky's abstract notion of linguistic competence, arguing that 'such a theory of competence posits ideal objects in abstraction from sociocultural features that might enter into their description' (Hymes, 2001 [1972], p. 55). Hymes argued that Chomsky's distinction of competence and performance is too narrow to describe contextualized human behavior adequately. Reviewing empirical research of the past five decades, Hymes showed that the rules of usage are dominant over the rules of grammar, and thus social life not only affects outward performance but inner competence as well. Hymes proposed a distinction between two competences: *linguistic competence* which allows speakers to produce and understand grammatically correct sentences and to intuitively judge utterances as either correct or incorrect, and *communicative competence* which allows producing and understanding utterances that are appropriate in a given context.

Hymes' call to recognize that language is also a social construct has been a catalyst in applied linguistics, as it has expanded the scope of competence and has brought about an abundance of research leaning towards a more functional approach. Hymes' (1972) ideas triggered the emergence of the communicative approach to language teaching. In their seminal papers, Canale and Swain (1980) and Canale (1983) further defined CC as the underlying system in which knowledge and skills needed for communication are combined. They described CC in terms of three main components: (1) *grammatical competence*, which is the knowledge of lexical items and rules, (2) *sociolinguistic competence* further divided by Canale (1983) into (2a) *sociocultural competence* – knowledge of the non-linguistic context and (2b) *discourse competence* – knowledge of rules that govern cohesion and coherence. The last component, (3) *strategic competence,* includes verbal and non-verbal strategies compensating for performance-related breakdowns in communication.

A critical analysis of this model was provided by Schachter (1990), who argued that the components of the Canale and Swain model are neither well-defined nor clearly understood (p. 46). She questioned the validity of the constituents, mainly the separation of sociolinguistic and discourse competence, and the inappropriate categorization of pragmatics as coextensive with discourse competence (p. 42). Similarly to Schachter, Bachman (1990a) also expressed doubts concerning the construct validity

of the same (and also of the refined, 1983) model. His criticism was based on empirical data, which demonstrated wide variations in correlations when testing the construct (p. 29). As Bachman argued, these are due to the fact that the actual measures consist of a mixture of diverse abilities. Moreover, he pointed out that the definition of discourse competence as the ability to use coherent and cohesive texts is highly problematic, as it conflates formal and functional aspects of discourse (pp. 29-30). Despite these criticisms, this model of three (Canale & Swain, 1980) and later of four (Canale 1983) components of CC has prevailed in the literature.

Van Ek (1986, 1987) developed a different model. In his view, the communicative ability of a speaker comprises six components: (1) *linguistic competence*, which is the ability to produce and interpret meaningful and grammatically correct utterances; (2) *sociolinguistic competence*, i.e., the awareness of relations between linguistic signals and their contextual and situational meanings; (3) *discourse competence*, which is the ability to use appropriate strategies in the construction and interpretation of texts; (4) *strategic competence*, the correct use of communicative strategies; (5) *socio-cultural competence*, i.e., familiarity with the socio-cultural framework of the language; and (6) *social competence*, the will and skill to interact with others (Van Ek, 1986, pp. 35-65).

As can be observed, these models overlap. The most important difference concerns Van Ek's broadening of the construct by incorporating more social and cultural elements. In comparison to Canale's classification (1983), Van Ek separates socio-cultural competence from sociolinguistic competence and adds social competence to the construct.

A more comprehensive and detailed model of CC was introduced by Bachman in the 1990s. By referring to those who have recognized the dynamic interaction between discourse and its context (Hymes, 1972; Kramsch, 1986; Savignon, 1983), Bachman (1990b) emphasized that the knowledge of how to use language to achieve particular communicative goals must be part of all models of CC (pp. 82-83). Drawing on previous research carried out in language testing, Bachman (1990b) coined the term *communicative language ability* arguing that this term combines what is denoted by both language proficiency and CC: both knowledge of the language and the ability of appropriately using it in given contexts. Bachman developed three central components for communicative language ability that are essential to define one's competence in communicative language use: (1) *language competence*, (2) *strategic competence*, and (3) *psycho-physiological mechanisms*. Language competence is a set of knowledge components utilized in communication via language, whereas strategic competence is the capacity to implement language competence in