INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE: A LITERATURE REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

In the situation of globalization, people of different backgrounds and perspectives are coming together in dense interactions both physically and virtually for many purposes. To be successful in those interactions, it is believed that they need to have "the ability to communicate effectively in cross-cultural situations and to relate appropriately in a variety of cultural contexts" (Bennett & Bennett, 2004, p. 149), which theoretically refers to their development of intercultural communicative competence (ICC). It is widely accepted that enhancing ICC has become a necessarily important mission of educators (Byram, 1997; Bennett, 2004; Deardorff, 2006; Bagwe & Haskollar, 2020) because nowadays it is not only a nicety but a necessity (Bennett, 2015). Educationally, a number of authors have developed different approaches in order to increase English-as-a-foreign-language learners' sense of ICC. However, very few studies have compared and contrasted different approaches based on their consideration of theoretical backgrounds that guide their research, teaching and learning contexts, two-side effects behind their pedagogical selections. The present research gathers data from many electronic sources to formalize a comprehensive picture depicting the history of ICC development and some ICC-related teaching and learning approaches together with their theoretical frameworks and implications. Purposefully, the findings of this research provide scholars, teacher educators and teaching practitioners with better understandings of various approaches in intercultural education; therefore, they can make better choices of ICC-related practices fitting their own situations.

Keywords: Intercultural Communicative Competence; Intercultural Education, Intercultural Models; Intercultural Literature Review

1. INTRODUCTION

Due to globalization, people interact with individuals from different cultures in both professional and personal life (Byram, 1997). Globalization has influenced all aspects of our life including the economy, technology, society, education, and so on. This fact led to a need for the development of intercultural communicative competence (ICC), especially in education, which has a power to improve life and transform communities (Krauss & Boss, 2013). Therefore, there is a growing body of literature that recognizes the importance of education in enhancing people's ICC. Deardorff (2017) claims that "students must be prepared for changing local and global environments in both personal and professional life" (Deardorff 2017, p. XXI). To fulfill this aim, teachers should improve

learners' understanding of their cultures and their counterparts' cultures, respect the differences among cultures to actively and confidently involve in different multi-cultural contexts (Byram, et al., 2001).

In this light, the Vietnamese government has declared the vision of taking ICC into account, which is well reflected in Decision No. 1400/QD-TTg issued by the Prime Minister on September the 30th, 2008. According to this decision, graduates from colleges and universities must be able to independently and confidently communicate in a foreign language so that they can learn and work in an integrated, multilingual, and multicultural environment. Moreover, in Decision No. 5209/QD-BGĐT issued on November 23rd, 2012, it is stated that high school pupils need to have a 'broad understanding of other cultures while promoting a sense of global citizenship in users' (*page 1- introduction, self-translation*). It can be seen from the two decisions that the Government recognizes the importance of ICC for both pupils and students thought out the education system in Vietnam.

However, little is known about how to improve learners' ICC. As it is widely recognized by practitioners and instructors in the field of English Language Teaching (ELT), foreign language education is the most versatile tool in order to help the learners' development of intercultural competence. Actually, foreign language education is not the sole way to have intercultural competence, but it is also regarded as the major source of having knowledge and skills to communicate better by integrating discourse elements to your daily speech patterns (Yesil & Demiröz, 2017).

Regarding ELT, it is widely argued that achieving only communicative competence is no longer sufficient and that the notion of ICC should also be considered (Mostafaei & Nosrati, 2018). Nonetheless, how to do this effectively is still controversial. Some believe that teachers should provide learners with knowledge about the target culture(s) and skills to deal with situations that can lead to conflicts due to differences in cultures. Neuliep (2009) has summarized such problems, for instance, misunderstanding of messages, communication style clash, stereotyping effect. Ahnagari and Zamanian (2014) suggest providing intercultural information in English reading lessons. Tran & Duong (2015) advise publishers to include Intercultural content in new English textbooks that they should focus on not only culture from English-speaking countries but also other cultures around the world. According to Tran (2014), teachers should choose methods, techniques, and materials to encourage and optimize different groups of knowledge and skills to improve learners' ICC.

However, other authors have suggested a more holistic view. López-Rocha (2016) emphasizes the need to incorporate skills and strategies for developing cultural awareness leading to ICC for global citizenship. He also suggests that culture teaching approaches should move from the descriptive to the interactionists, fostering interactions and discussion leading to self-awareness, openness, and transformation. Especially, he believes that via language learning, we can use our own experience to enhance the students' exploration of culture: Their own and that of the target language. It can be seen that López-Rocha focuses on self-exploration, which also agrees with Norton (2013)

that the representation of one's identity positively affects language and cultural learning. In this sense, implementing ICC in ELT allows learners to express their identities while engaging in meaningful discussions about cultural views.

This article aims to gather data from many electronic sources to formalize a comprehensive picture depicting the history of ICC development and some ICC-related teaching and learning approaches. Regarding the history of ICC, I will summarize the main focus of other researchers in different historical periods. It is important to cover a long history of ICC development as it will provide readers with conceptualizations of key terms and key issues at different times. Therefore, they can understand the underlying reasons for different choices of ICC models. Referring to ICC approaches, I will discuss some practical models together with their theoretical frameworks and implications, which are suitable to present time.

We examine a long past event – the emergence of a 70-plus-year old sector – due to various reasons. First, it is purely academic – this topic was not a central question in any previous studies. Second, through the panoramic view that this article is going to adopt, ICC will emerge as a more comprehensive field. Our implication is that scholars, teacher educators, and teaching practitioners should have a better understanding of the whole history of ICC as well as various approaches in intercultural education; therefore, they can make better choices of ICC-related practices fitting their own situations and filling in the gap of the ICC picture.

The text that follows this introduction will consist of three main parts. We first review the key concepts that are relevant to intercultural education. We then continue with the scenic picture of ICC history over three main periods, namely the early stage, the mature stage, and the present time. The discussions of scholars in each period are believed to have a focal point. The suggested model section will introduce two models considered to be meaningful and practical for scholars, teacher educators, and teaching practitioners. The article will end with some closing remarks.

2. Intercultural Communicative Competence

2.1. Culture

To capture the fundamental ideas of ICC, it is important to understand what "culture" is. However, there have been hundreds of definitions of culture. Faulkner, et al., (2006) analyzed over 300 definitions of culture and identified seven themes, which are structure/pattern, function, process, product, refinement, power or ideology, and group membership.

First, the structure/pattern theme sees culture as fixed elements or a collection of elements, focusing on its elements. This type of definition neglects the differences within cultures and the dynamic nature of culture. Second, the functional definitions emphasize outcomes (e.g., to adapt to the world, and express values) and so they see culture as purposive and intentional. Third, the process view sees culture as what happens, "something that occurs, rather than simply a set of elements such as structures or functions to be observed passively" (Faulkner et al., 2006, p. 41). It focuses on

people's processes of making sense of or constructing reality. Fourth, the product view emphasizes culture as artifacts and thus tends to be a more static view of cultures. Fifth, the refinement definitions emphasize culture as morality and intellectual development and thus share the active view of culture as a process. Sixth, the culture as power or ideology definitions emphasize culture as a more holistic concept that includes structure, functions, process, and products. Finally, the group-membership definitions frame culture as group membership (Faulkner et al., 2006).

Though cultures and the conceptualizations of culture are actively shifting, opposing, overlapping, and discursive, and any single definition or summary of definitions of culture may not fully reflect the dynamic nature of culture, (Baldwin, et al.,2006; and Faulkner, et al., 2006), it is still vital to agree on a definition used in a certain context.

In 1967, a constructivist definition of "culture" was given by the sociologists, Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann in their seminal work, The Social Construction of Reality. According to this definition, which is commonly used by interculturalists, objective culture is distinct from subjective culture (Bennett, 2004).

Objective culture indicates the institutional aspects of culture, including political and economic systems, and its products like art, music, cuisine, etc. This notion of objective culture is useful for understanding the cultural creations of other groups, but it is not sufficient to enhance intercultural competence (Bennett, 2004).

Subjective culture is used to refer to the worldview of a society's people. Bennett (2015) defines subjective culture as "the shared values, beliefs, and behaviors that are created, repaired, and transformed in and through communication". Berger and Luckmann (1967, cited by Bennett, 2004) claim that objective culture is internalized through socialization, and subjective culture is externalized through role behavior. Subjective culture provides us with direct insight into the worldview of different cultural groups which transform into more effective interaction (Bennett, 2004).

In this paper, 'culture' attributes to subjective culture, 'the shared values, beliefs, and behaviors that are created, repaired, and transformed in and through communication' (Bennett 2015 p.43). In this meaning, culture is considered as a dynamic process and continually undergoes a transformation. This definition resonates Byram's (1997) idea that a 'culture' is a combination of beliefs, behaviours and meanings. It also shares ideas with Spitzberg and Changnon (2009) who define culture as "a primitive theoretical term, concerned with enduring yet evolving intergenerational attitudes, values, beliefs, rituals/customs, and behavioral patterns into which people are born but that is created and maintained by people's ongoing actions" (p. 6).

2.2. Intercultural Competence

Intercultural competence (IC) is again one of the most significant terms in the field which is defined very differently. Deardorff (2006) claims that there have been a myriad of definitions of IC, and for several decades, scholars have not agreed on a common definition of IC. That is why she did a research project investigating which definition gained the most agreement from educational administrators.

In the investigation into the definitions of IC conducted by Deardorff (2006), nine definitions of IC, extracted from intercultural literature, were given to the participants midlevel and senior-level administrators from 24 U.S. postsecondary institutions. The definition that was believed to be the most applicable to institutions' internationalization strategies was one derived from Byram's (1997) work on IC. It received an average rating of 3.5 out of 4.0 and was summarized as follows: "Knowledge of others; knowledge of self; skills to interpret and relate; skills to discover and/or to interact; valuing others' values, beliefs, and behaviors; and relativizing one's self. Linguistic competence plays a key role" (Byram, 1997, p. 34). The second best-received definition states that IC comprises five components, including "World knowledge, foreign language proficiency, cultural empathy, approval of foreign people and cultures, ability to practice one's profession in an international setting" (Lambert, 1994, as cited in Deardorff, 2006, p. 230). Moreover, some other schools had developed their own definitions of IC that were broader and contained several common elements. The three most common elements were the awareness, valuing, and understanding of cultural differences; experiencing other cultures; and self-awareness of one's own culture. It can be seen that these common elements emphasize the underlying importance of cultural awareness, both of one's own as well as others' cultures (Deardorff 2006).

Regarding the constructs of IC, Bennett (2015) suggests that IC is 'a set of cognitive, affective, and behavioral skills and characteristics that support effective and appropriate interaction in a variety of cultural contexts' (p. xxiii). IC comprises three components (1) using knowledge in a cognitively complex way to understand one's experience as opposed to remaining unable to make new distinctions regarding one's experience, (2) an interior emotional effect of curiosity and confidence as opposed to one of anxiety, and (3) a behavioral tendency toward actively engaging in new ways as opposed to avoiding situations and new behaviors.

2.3. Communicative Competence versus ICC

As mentioned previously, in the field of foreign language teaching, there was a shift from improving learners' communicative competence to intercultural communicative competence due to globalization. The concept 'communicative competence' was developed by Hymes (1972). His conceptualization of communicative competence was first utilized in understanding first language acquisition, then it was applied in foreign language teaching initiating a movement namely communicative language teaching. Hymes (1972) argued that to understand first language acquisition, it is vital to pay attention to not only grammatical competence but also the ability to use language appropriately. That means language learners should be able to figure out where and how a foreign language might be used, rather than analyze language isolated from use (Byram, 1997). In this definition, the 'appropriateness' is highlighted.

According to Wiemann and Backlund (1980, as cited by Byram, 1997), appropriateness generally refers to the ability of an interactant to meet the basic

contextual requirements of the situation to be effective in a general sense. These contextual requirements include: (1) The verbal context, that is, making sense in terms of wording, of statements, and of the topic; (2) the relationship context, that is, the structuring, type, and style of messages so that they are consonant with the relationship between particular speakers in a certain context; and (3) the environmental context, that is, the consideration of constraints imposed on message made by the symbolic and physical environments.

Besides appropriateness, effectiveness has also been widely mentioned in discussions of communication competence. 'Effectiveness refers to an individual's ability to produce intended effects through interaction with the environment (Chen & Starosta, 1996, p.6). This ability is treated either as a basic human skill that is obtained through learning and socialization processes or as an acquired ability that is related neither to personal intellect nor to education. In addition, ideally, competent communicators should be able to control and manipulate their environments to achieve personal goals. In order to successfully attain such goals, individuals must be able to identify them, get relevant information about them, accurately predict others' responses, select communication strategies, implement these communication strategies, and accurately assess the interaction results.

Regarding Intercultural Communication Competence, the literature treats intercultural communication competence in much the same way as it does communication competence in general (Hammer, 1988; Lustig & Koester, 1993; Martin, 1989; Ruben, 1989; Spitzberg, 1988, 1989; Wiseman & Koester, 1993, as cited by Chen et al., 1996). The only difference is, in addition to looking at communication competence as effective and appropriate interaction, intercultural communication scholars place more emphasis on contextual factors. In this paper, ICC and IC are used interchangeably.

3. History of ICC development

3.1. Early stage

Chen (1996) reviews 211 studies published between 1951 and 1995 and summarizes themes of research on intercultural communication. The discussions over nearly 50 years were pivotal around some main themes, including distinguishing ICC and CC, reasons to increase ICC, and approaches to increase ICC. The findings are summarized in the following concept map, (see *figure 1*).

Martin, et al. (2020) clarify the development of the discipline in smaller periods. He claims that a formal (sub)discipline of intercultural communication developed in the mid-twentieth century as a result of the collaboration between linguists and anthropologists. Two decades later, there were no agreed-upon theories or methods, scholars were working to better understand the nonverbal and verbal aspects of intercultural communication. In the 1980s intercultural communication discipline influences shifted away from anthropology and linguistics to social psychology approaches. The 1980s-90s and beyond saw the explosion of the study of intercultural communication and applied linguistics around the world.
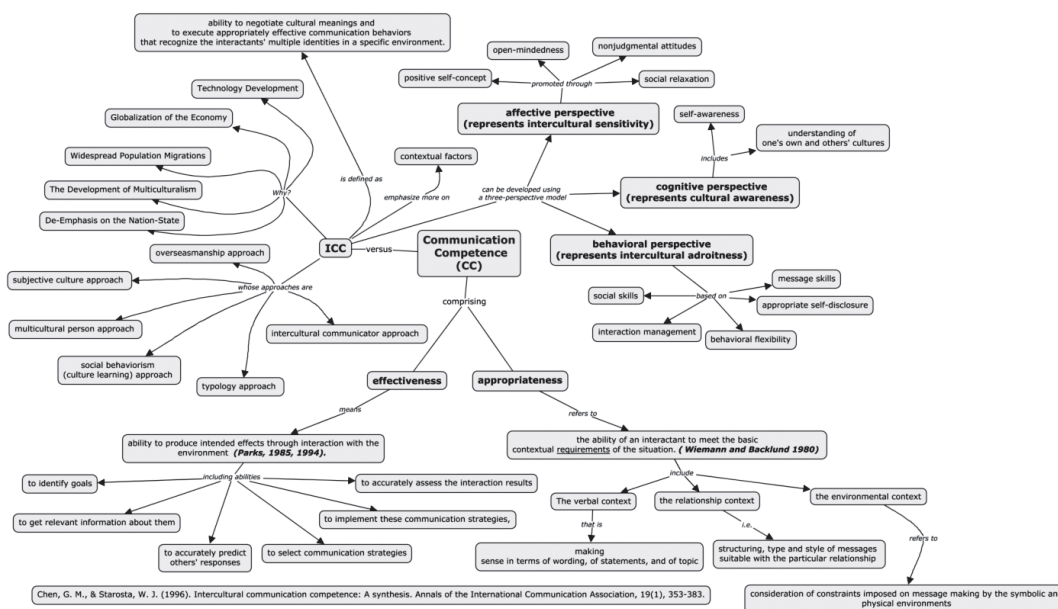
Figure 1:Initial discussions on ICC

3.2. The mature stage

Moeller and Nugent (2014) have reviewed 31 studies about IC and ICC published between 1989 and 2013. The study has explored various ways to improve learners' ICC, which is illustrated in *figure 2*.

The study provides insights into some key notions and how they can impact the cultural component, which is inextricably connected to the other component of a foreign language curriculum, i.e. the language component. The authors first unfolded the nature of culture, which is ever-changing and highly complex. According to the authors, IC is also a construct that is hard to define but it is commonly referred to as the ability to interact appropriately and effectively with those from other cultural backgrounds. Regarding ICC, it was clarified as the ability to communicate appropriately and effectively in a foreign language and with people from diverse cultural backgrounds (Byram, 1997). It can be seen that in the definition of ICC, a new construct is mentioned, i.e. the use of a foreign language in the interactions between interlocutors.

The authors discovered various models of intercultural competence and found out the common themes among them, which are self-awareness and identity transformation. While Bennet's (1993, cited by Moeller & Nugent, 2014) Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) focuses more on identity transformation, the focal point of Gudykunst's (1993 cited by Moeller & Nugent, 2014) Anxiety/ Uncertainty Management Model (AUM) is self-awareness. Although Byram's (1997) Multidimensional Model of Intercultural Competence looked more closely at the goal/destination of the journey to higher IC; he also paid attention to the process aspect of IC. Byram (1997) describes the intercultural learning process as linear. Learners enter the process from different points based on backgrounds, life experiences, and perspectives, and move at different speeds (Byram, 1997). There is no predefined final goal for the students in the classroom, rather

each experience becomes its own goal in interculturality (Byram, 1997). Deardorff's (2006) Process Model of Intercultural Competence obviously focuses on the process, more specifically, "a continuous process of working on attitudes, knowledge, internal outcomes, and external outcomes related to intercultural competence". According to Deardorff (2006), "the journey is never ending as the learner continues to learn, change, evolve, and become transformed with time". It is clear that Deardorff's model also addresses both self-awareness and identity transformation.

From the models above, different authors have formulated ways to improve learners' ICC in foreign language classes. In general, most authors concentrate on the inquiry journey in which learners "explore, discover, analyze, and evaluate meaningful information through primary and authentic texts, audio, video, and media" (Byram et al., 2001). The role of teachers shifted from knowledge transferers into facilitators guiding the learning process.

The authors also mention some practical examples of ICC improving activities that embed different theoretical models. Among the activities mentioned, I really appreciate the OSEE tool by Deardorff/ Deardorff, (2000; cited by Moeller & Nugent, 2014). It is believed that by practicing regularly observing people's attitudes, the learners can develop the ability to observe things mindfully, which helps them build up more insightful knowledge about different cultures. By stating objectively what is happening and exploring different explanations for what is happening, they do not only learn to interpret things without giving judgment but also improve their language ability. Finally, by evaluating which explanation is the most likely one, they can get used to ambiguity, and encourage them to explore more. That is because human interaction does not follow preconceived rules therefore, many factors must be considered in order to appropriately assess the situation in question (Deardorff, 201; cited by Moeller & Nugent, 2014)).
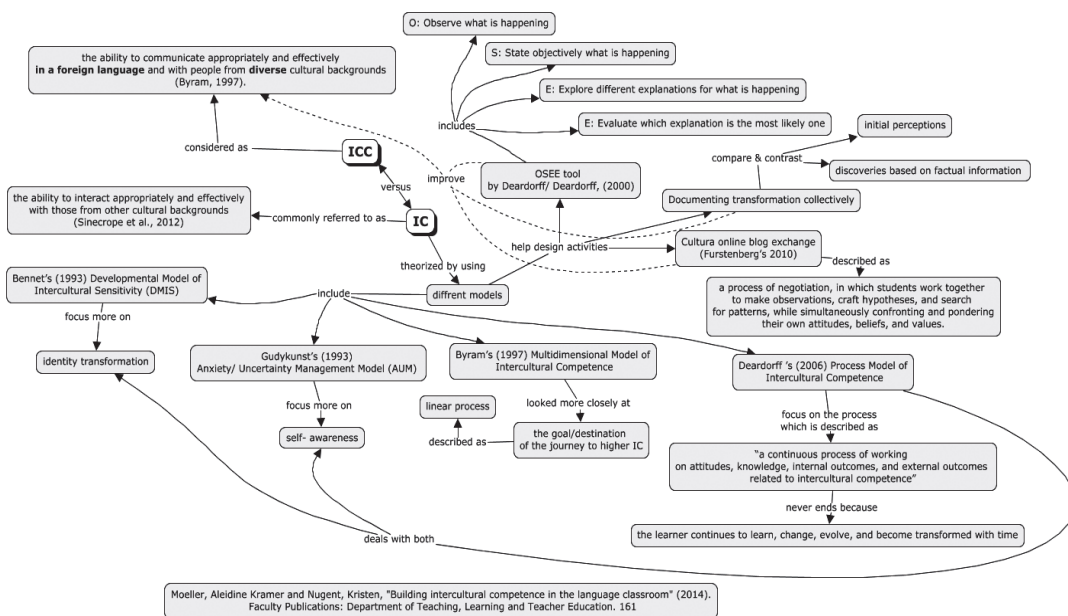

Figure 2: Early ICC models

3.3. Present time

Tanu and Haskollar (2020) review 54 studies in the field of IC published between 1986 and 2018. The study's findings are summarized in *Figure 3*.

The study's theoretical framework is based on Bennett & Bennett's definition of IC, which is "the ability to communicate effectively in cross-cultural situations and to relate appropriately in a variety of cultural contexts" (Bennett & Bennett, 2004, p. 149). According to this definition, both intercultural mindset (awareness and knowledge of different cultures) and intercultural skillset (understanding & appreciating cultural differences, and learning how to adjust behavior) are appreciated. The concepts of intercultural competence and intercultural sensitivity are in light of Bennett's Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS). This theoretical model proposed six developmental stages categorized into two bigger groups namely Ethnocentric stages (denial, defense, and minimization) and ethnorelative stages (acceptance, adaptation, and integration). The Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) continuum was built on the DMIS model, predicting a person's stage of intercultural development, and providing more measurable categorizations for ethnocentrism versus ethnorelativism.

The findings revealed that Demographic characteristics and intercultural competence may or may not influence learners' IC. Therefore, drawing conclusions based on general demographic characteristics seems unjustified and is best left to be analyzed on a case-by-case basis. However, intercultural training programs can play a crucial role in developing learners' IC. Intercultural training programs can be various trainings with integrated intercultural competence pedagogy, one-on-one mentoring either domestically or abroad, learning reflections, peer support, and intercultural interactions. It is also discovered that the combination of two or more interventions challenges participants sufficiently to bring positive changes in their intercultural competence.

Moreover, interventions that provide multiple opportunities to reflect and contextualize intercultural experiences with introspection and a well-designed feedback loop work better than an unrelated patchwork of ideas. Admittedly, the impact of these interventions can vary from significant to only small gains (Altshuler et al., 2003; Tinkham, 2011; cited by Tanu and Haskollar (2020), depending on the willingness of the participant to change themselves (Kobayashi, 2009; cited by Tanu and Haskollar (2020). This willingness, in turn, can be largely associated with previous intercultural experiences.

Collaborative online international learning (COIL) programs are the third way to integrate intercultural learning in the classroom where students can interact with individuals from other cultures to build an intercultural mindset and skillset.

This paper has given me an optimistic thought that regardless of learners' background, it is still important for teachers to design thoroughly planned programs that help them develop ICC so that they can function well in today's world of dense interactions with people from various perspectives.
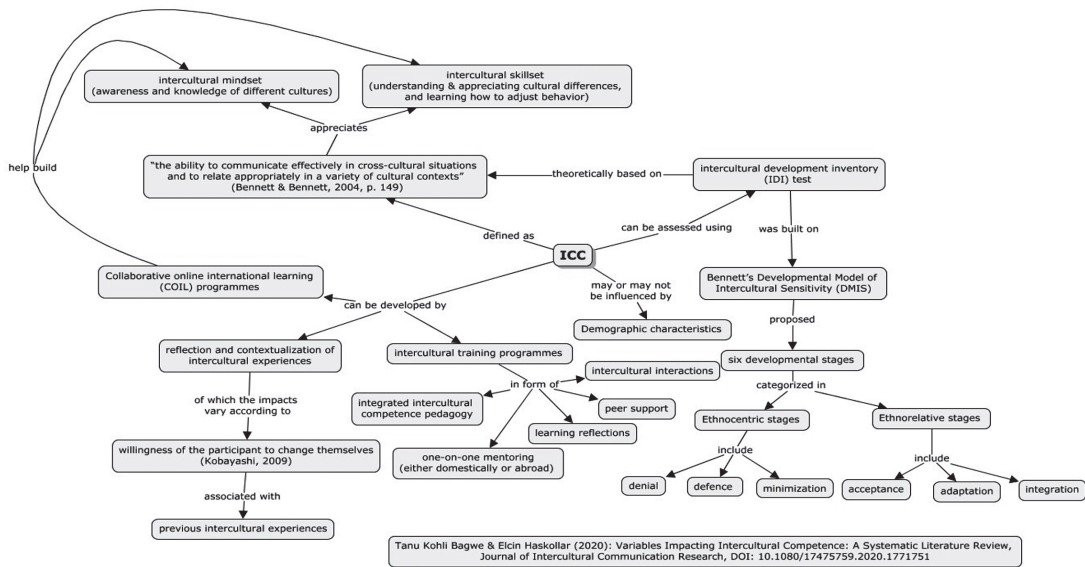
Figure 3: Variables Impacting ICC

Despite over seventy years of scholarly discussions on intercultural competence, this concept continues to be the focal point of both research and practice in many disciplines in higher education. Increasingly, there are strong calls for concrete examples of what intercultural competence development and assessment look like in actual contexts. Deardorff and Arasaratnam-Smith (2017) identify the following emerging key themes and implications, which are summarized in *figure 4*.
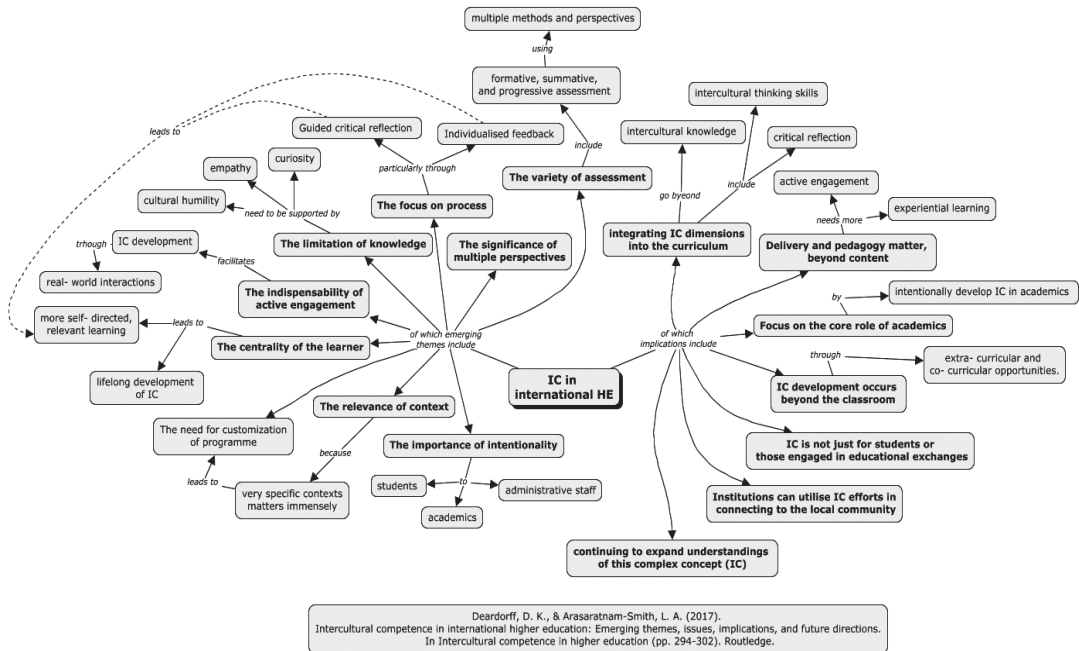

Figure 4: ICC in higher education – emerging key themes and implications

3. ICC models

3.1. Calloway and Deardorff's model

The authors introduce their model with humane ideas. First, they firmly state that "Given the turmoil of the present age, one could argue that intercultural competence is desperately needed" (Calloway and Deardorff, 2017, p. 32). It can be clearly seen that in a globalized world, people of different backgrounds are coming together in dense interactions. In many cases, we do not have a full understanding of one another; as a result, we are suffering a state of uncertainty and confusion while interacting with others. Moreover, they claim the importance of *empathy* to solve the problem. They argue that empathy is the most important sentiment that has the potential to change what we do interculturally and especially in higher education. Empathy is the moral glue that holds civil society together; if we do not have robust habits of mind and reciprocal behavior that lead to empathy, society as we know it will break up. It is obvious that there is a close relationship between empathy and IC. It can be simply put that without empathy (understand and love others), one can hardly interact well with others from the same culture, therefore, cannot successfully connect with people from other cultures. Regarding *empathy*, the authors mention many other researchers' ideas, but all of them are related to knowledge, information, understanding, cognitively, etc. so it means that empathy is not a natural feature of some certain people, it is something that can be educated.

In terms of enhancing empathy, the authors mention the stages of developing it, which is very useful for teachers/ trainers to assess their leaners' empathy over a certain period of training. Moreover, they have listed the barriers to empathy development. These can help teachers clearly define what they should help their learners to avoid.

To sum up, this study has provided me with in-depth theory about empathy, which is closely related to IC, and strategies to improve learners' empathy as summarized in *figure 5* below.
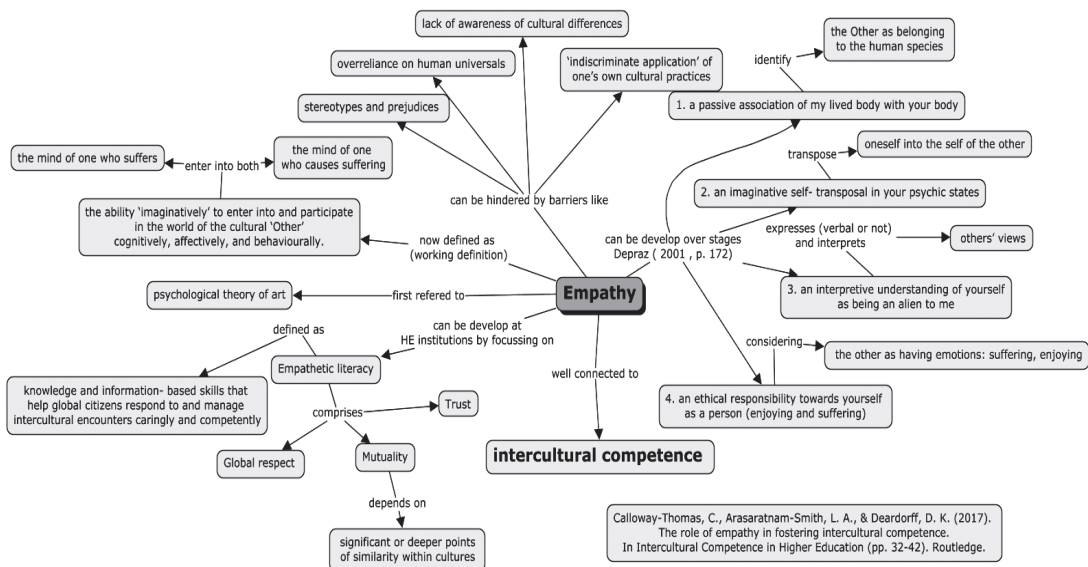

Figure 5: *Calloway and Deardorff's model*

3.2. Binder's model

Binder (2017) combined Deardorff's (2006) Pyramid Model of Intercultural Competence and the personal- leadership methodology by Schaetti, Ramsey, and Watanabe (2008, 2009, as cited by Binder 2017)

As summarized on the concept map (*Figure 6*), Binder (2017) has a very persuasive framework of IC based on which she designed an IC course with clear objectives. The framework does not only thoroughly describe the components of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that learners should gain but also how to achieve them. Take knowledge as an example, she clarifies different fields of knowledge learners should master, including basics of cultural psychology (origins of culture and cultural influences on cognition and perception), cultural differences in verbal and non-verbal behavior, cultural self-awareness – which can be improved by reflective tasks.

Another interesting point of this research is that the researchers found the co-relation between IC and personal leadership skills; therefore, she used personal leadership methodology to complement IC theory. I believe that the principles, the practices, and the critical moment dialogue (*see figure 6*) to improve learners' personal leadership skills are really beneficial to enhance one's IC. For instance, the understanding of themselves (or their inner world – by attending to emotions mindfully, cultivating stillness, etc.). can help improve their cultural self-awareness, because only by thoroughly understanding what is happening inside, one can interpret how he/she is influenced by the surrounding community, the national context, and the global context. In addition, it is believed that by improving one's creativeness, one can be more adaptable and flexible as he/she can always find new ideas, new solutions, new ways of seeing things instead of being fixed to a certain system belief and values. Finally, it can be argued that a person who pays attention to his/her judgements, can engage with ambiguity, care about his/her and others' emotions will be more curious and opener to others' belief and values.

The author also suggests different methods to improve learners' IC and personal leadership skills, such as reflective tasks, DIE, critical moment dialogue. These sound persuasive and worth trying. These are precious keywords that can be used as guidelines.
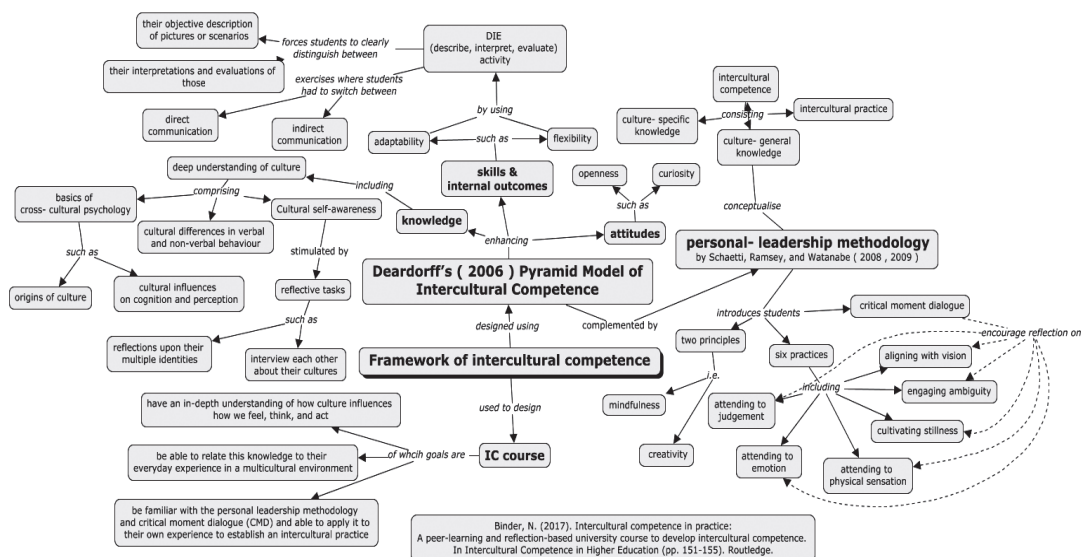

Figure 6: Binder's model

4. Conclusion

Communication competence has been studied for many years, but its application to intercultural education continues to evolve. In this paper, we have examined the broad history of intercultural education over a long period of around seventy years and different ICC models. We find that in different stages in ICC history, scholars have mainly discussed a certain topic. During the first stage which lasted approximately fifty years, authors mainly conceptualized key terms of the field. In the next stage, studies focused on deeper insights into key terms, especially the difference between IC and ICC. In addition, in the second stage, some models improving ICC were introduced, most of which dealt with identity transformation and self-awareness. In the third stage, the present time, beside the discussions about the concept of ICC, and models to enhance learners' ICC, there are more studies about learners' ICC development and assessment. Regarding ICC models, instead of focusing on rather broad terms as in previous studies, models of present time prioritize more concrete terms, such as empathy, and more practical methods with detailed guidelines.

This study contributes to the existing ICC literature with a broader view showing how the field of ICC has evolved. The findings of this study provide scholars, teacher educators, and teaching practitioners with a better understanding of various approaches in intercultural education; therefore, they can make better choices of ICC-related research themes and/or ICC-related practices fitting their own situations.

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