

Pathways to teacher education for Intercultural Communicative Competence: teachers' perceptions

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Abstract

Intercultural and plurilingual encounters have become increasingly frequent due to ICT developments, mobility and migration. To face the challenges inherent to such encounters, the development of Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) is crucial. ICC development may start in the home but is a responsibility of schooling in particular in language classrooms. To facilitate this, language teachers should attend training programs aimed at giving them the ability to integrate the intercultural dimension into their professional practice.

Within this framework, we implemented a training programme entitled *The Intercultural Teacher*, during 2006/2007, with an experimental group of language teachers from secondary schools in the Aveiro district (Portugal). In this article we describe teachers' social perceptions of ICC and address the following questions: What does ICC mean to languages' teachers? What are teachers' views on the development of ICC? The findings of this analysis enabled us, firstly, to design a heuristic model of ICC, based on teachers' views and perceptions. Then we identified some pathways for developing ICC through teacher education, which are validated by teachers themselves.

Introduction

Owing to linguistic and cultural diversity, we are currently witnessing a political-educational effort to implement plurilingual and intercultural education. Schools in general and language teachers in particular play an important role in developing and educating responsible citizens who are able to operate within multiple contexts as intercultural mediators (Byram 2009; Cavalli et al. 2009; European Council 2009; Leo 2010).

Consequently, Language Didactics, a scientific domain that may be characterized by its 'porosité idéologique' (Puren 2007) – by the way in which social and political circumstances influence its discourses – is currently centred on concepts such as *plurilingualism*, *intercultural dialogue*, *intercomprehension*, and *democratic and intercultural citizenship*. In these contemporary discourses, the development of a plurilingual and intercultural communicative competence (ICC) is encouraged, articulating the linguistic and cultural

knowledge and skill acquired throughout life in formal and informal learning contexts (Cavalli et al. 2009; Coste et al. 2009).

However, if language classrooms are viewed as one avenue through which the teaching of ICC can be integrated (Beacco 2005; Cavalli et al. 2009; Coste et al. 2009), various studies have shown that language teachers feel unprepared to develop this competence in their classes (Bastos & Araújo e Sá 2008b; Cushner & Mahon 2009; Leo 2010). Thus, investment in teacher education is crucial, not only to build professional competences that foster the development of ICC in their professional settings, but also, above all, to develop their own ICC. In fact, teachers cannot teach what they do not know, do not possess, or do not believe in, and ‘developing the intercultural competence of young people ... requires a core of teachers and teacher educators who have not only attained this sensitivity and skills themselves but are also able to transmit this to young people in their charge’ (Cushner & Mahon 2009: 304). Given this background, we developed *The Intercultural Teacher*, a training program (TP) at a school in the Aveiro district, Portugal, which aimed to provide language teachers with a double training experience in ICC, both as professionals and as individuals.

The purpose of this paper is, first, to give an account of ICC and of the opportunities and challenges of implementing it in educational contexts based on the perceptions and views of the language teachers who followed our TP. Our interest in their shared perceptions is due to the assumption that perceptions of languages, cultures and identities, of didactical concepts (such as ICC) and of language teachers’ roles and competences, could ‘strongly determine the way teachers teach, the way they develop as teachers and their attitudes toward educational changes’ (Beijaard, Meijer & Verloop 2004: 108). Based on these perceptions of the development of ICC, we then intend to identify possible pathways for teachers’ education of ICC, which might help inform the development of future training programmes. Bearing these purposes in mind, we first present the background to the study, starting with the context of data collection and then discussing the research design. Then, based on teachers’ perceptions, we present an account of ICC as it emerges from the language teachers’ discourses and, finally, we identify some ideas and pathways for language teachers’ ICC education, from language teachers’ perspectives.

The background to the study: *the intercultural teacher*

The TP is based on the perspective that human development (personal and/or professional) results from the interaction between research, reflection and practice, in an ecological dynamic (Bronfenbrenner 2002; Morin 2008), as explained in Figure 1:

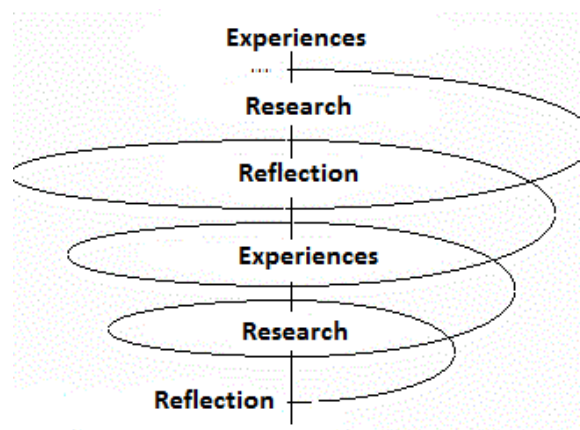


Figure 1. Dynamics of professional development

This ecological dynamic refers to a continual and recursive development based on what individuals already know and are able to do to and how the outcomes of one stage of a developmental process constantly trigger a new one (as the image of the spiral suggests); this enables the individual to progress. Within this perspective of teacher education and professional development, the aim of the TP is to support teachers to develop their own ICC and their professional competences so that they can deal with linguistic and cultural diversity and promote the development of ICC in their professional settings. In order to define the training dimensions for ICC, we draw on the model proposed by Andrade & Pinho (2003) for training on linguistic and cultural diversity. The authors suggest three nuclear dimensions: a) *social/political dimension*, related to understanding the educational role that the language curriculum plays in the construction of societies equipped to deal with diversity; b) *personal dimension*, concerned with the unique and individual character of plurilingual and intercultural competences, seen as a result of the live trajectories of individuals and their ideologies; c) *didactic dimension*, linked to professional know-how i.e. to competence in organizing and implementing language learning activities and strategies aimed at developing plurilingual and intercultural competences.

Intending to work these three training dimensions, we organized our TP around four training axes. The first one, “awareness of...” the cultural/linguistic diversity of modern societies and the responsibilities of the school and language teachers in such contexts, intends to make teachers aware of their responsibilities as teachers nowadays, strongly related to the *social / political dimension* mentioned above. For this, we have suggested a critical review of some studies related to the migratory dynamics in Portugal and of the European and Portuguese political orientations in what language education concerns. Other training axe, “reflecting on...”, intends to make teachers analyse their personal and professional perceptions, practice and paths in what the linguistic and cultural diversity management concerns, in articulation with *personal* and *didactic dimensions*. For promote these individual reflective dynamics all along the TP, we used a specific set of materials, the *Professional Portfolios* i.e. individual documents that teachers should fill in throughout the TP, composed of the following sections: "My ID", "My (professional, linguistic/communicative and intercultural) profile", "My portfolio" (materials produced during the TP); "My log" (individual reflections); and "My evaluation of the TP". "Communicative and intercultural action" was another training axe, in which teachers have participated in a training session on

the *Galanet* platform – (see www.galanet.eu for more information) throughout they should interact with participants from other countries and cultures, developing with them a project around a topic democratically chosen by them. With this axe, we intend to foster the development of an ICC in a real plurilingual and multicultural situation, in closed relation to the *personal* and *social/political* dimensions of ICC. Finally, the "Professional action" axe consists on developing collaborative projects for increasing ICC in their professional settings, embed on a co-action approach of *learning by doing* specific related to the *didactic dimension*. Therefore, our TP intends to work those three training dimensions of ICC (*personal, didactic and social/political*) within the activities proposed on the four training axes mentioned above, in ecological and recursive dynamics of *research-action-reflection*. Figure 2 systematises the design that underlines our TP.

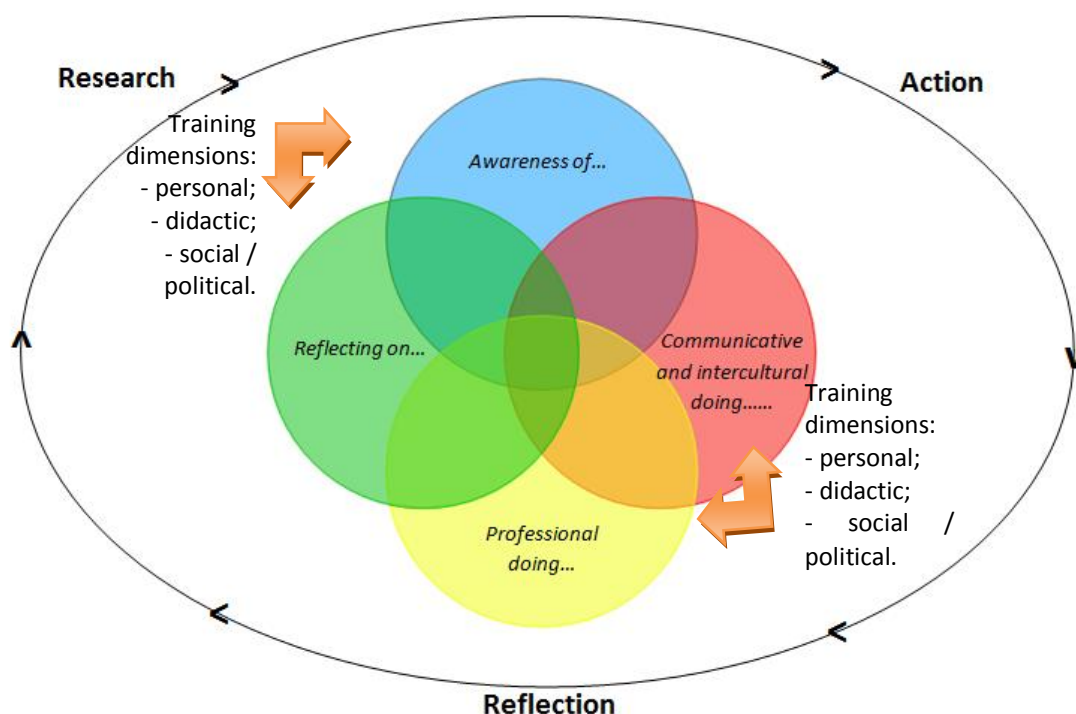


Figure 2. Training program design

To make this TP operational, we envisage training strategies that may be organised into four main types (Araújo e Sá 2003): *dialogical, analytical, reflection* and *discovery strategies*. *Dialogical strategies* refer to experiential activities of plurilingual and intercultural interaction and multiple forms of dialogue (between languages and cultures, school subjects, teachers etc), such as the participation in collaborative action research projects and in the *Galanet* training session. *Analytical strategies* comprise activities to raise awareness and to demonstrate the value of multilingualism and multiculturalism, not only deepening central concepts on Language Didactics, such as (linguistic/cultural) diversity, plurilingual competence and ICC, but also interpreting political and educational guidelines. *Reflection strategies* foster, as the term mean, the reflection upon their own linguistic, intercultural and professional practices, namely in the activities related to the *Professional Portfolios* or in the assessment of the collaborative projects developed during the TP. Finally, the *discovery strategies* correspond to the practice of explanation and verbalisation (of concepts, beliefs and

professional ideologies), rendering them perceptible and comprehensible to the *self*. In short, the proposed TP sought to articulate the *personal, social/political* and *didactic dimensions* of training for linguistic and cultural diversity through activities of different natures, but always interconnected, in order to foster the development of personal and professional competences for a didactic approach to the concept of ICC.

The TP is composed of two training stages. Despite their ecological dynamics, they have some particularities in what their purposes and nature concerns. The first one, *Language Teacher: promoter of a plurilingual and intercultural school*, has a more theoretical and informative nature, focused on furthering theoretical questions; it is primarily focused on the first two levels of the spiral of professional development i.e. reflection and research, through searching and accessing information (Figure 1). On the other hand, the second training stage, *The Intercultural Language Teacher: from the virtual world to school*, focuses on the foundations of practices and on their innovation, and has an experimental nature (*learn by doing*), embracing what are considered the three ‘gears’ of the professional development i.e. reflection, research and experiences (Figure 1). In Table 1, we summarize these two stages of our TP.

	First stage:	Second stage:
Nature	Informative/theoretical and reflective.	Informative/theoretical, reflective and experimental.
Focus	Theoretical questions.	Innovation and/or validation of professional practices.
Hours	25 hours	50 hours
Key concepts	Plurality/Linguistic and Cultural Diversity; Plurilingualism; Plurilingual Competence; ICC; Democratic/Intercultural Citizenship; Intercomprehension.	
Training Axes	- “Awareness of...”; - “Reflecting on...”.	- “Awareness of...”; - “Reflecting on...”; - “Communicative and Intercultural Doing”; - “Professional Doing”.
Aims	- Raise awareness of the cultural and linguistic plurality of our societies; - Deepen and/or actualize knowledge on political and educative orientations, and on theoretical concepts related to diversity; - Question teachers’ perceptions about ICC, linguistic and cultural diversity, and about teachers’ role(s) in such contexts; - Reflect on their professional practices and those of their own professional settings.	The same 4 aims of the first stage and: - Develop plurilingual competence and ICC; - Develop professional competences to work on ICC in their professional settings.
Products	- <i>Professional Portfolios</i> ; - reports of their professional settings (cf. the last training moment).	- <i>Professional Portfolios</i> ; - Interactions (on the platform’s forums and chat rooms) and plurilingual products of the <i>Galanet</i> session; - action projects (cf. the last training moment).

Table 1. Training programme summary

In short, the programme was based on an integrative approach that calls upon theoretical, experimental and reflective dynamics, introducing them in a balanced interaction, and tending to become more complex and holistic during the second training stage.

The TP was offered as part of in-service teacher education, giving “professional credits” to teachers who attend, helping advance their professional career. In accordance with teachers’ needs and interests, they could attend the TP in three possible ways: only the first stage (1“professional credit”), if they sought to expand their theoretical knowledge on consolidating or supporting plurilingual, intercultural and/or professional practices; only the second stage (3.2“professional credits”), if they preferred to focus on innovation of educational practices and/or on developing their own ICC; the entire TP (4.2“professional credits”), in a more cohesive and holistic way, combining a more theoretical approach to ICC with a more experiential and reflective one.

Design of the empirical study

In order to develop a descriptive ICC model based on teachers’ perceptions, we devised the following research questions: How do teachers that attended to our TP conceptualise ICC? How do they perceive the process of developing this competence?

To answer these questions, we have chosen as data gathering tools the “Intercultural Profile” from the *Professional Portfolios*, filled in throughout the entire TP (Table 1, *Products*); and nine interviews conducted in Portuguese (and translated into English here) one year after the end of the TP, after a first analysis of the data from these *Professional Portfolios*. These interviews are composed by three moments: in the first moment, within a non-structured and narrative approach, teachers are invited to reflect upon their professional and intercultural development; in the second moment, they were confronted with what they wrote on their “Intercultural Profile” and invited to comment, complete and clarify their sentences, one year after; in the third moment, we presented a descriptive model of ICC based on what teachers wrote on their “Intercultural Profiles” and asked them to analyse it and clarify if that model fit their ICC conception. These two last moments gave us relevant data to construct the descriptive and heuristic model of ICC that we intend to present in this paper. There was no structural guide for these interviews or even a list of questions, we just have used some materials (an image for the first moment; the “Intercultural Profiles” of each participant for the second moment; and the preliminary descriptive model of ICC for the third moment) to make teachers reflect and comment on it, namely by reformulating or reconstructing the categories of analysis we have defined, trying not to guide and/or constrain their responses. With these interviews, we intended to increase the reliability of our preliminary findings, requesting *feedback* from the participants themselves (Maxwell 1997; Stake 2009).

As participants in the studyⁱⁱ we selected three teachers from the three possible training paths, as clarified in Table 2:

Professional characteristics	Path 1 (stage 1)		Path 2 (stage 2)		Path 3 (stages 1+2)	
	All registered teachers: 9	Our sample: 3	All registered teachers : 4	Our sample: 3	All registered teachers: 3	Our sample: 3
Gender	Female: 9	3	Female: 4	3	Female: 3	3
Age	31 to 40: 1 41 to 50: 6 51 to 60: 2	0 2 1	31 to 40: 1 41 to 50: 3	1 2	31 to 40: 1 41 to 50: 1 51 to 60: 1	1 1 1
Academic	Bachelor’s: 8	3	Bachelor’s: 2	1	Bachelor’s: 2	2

degree	Master: 1	0	Master: 2	2	Post-graduation: 1	1
Languages taught (NB: in Portugal, language teachers are able to teach, at least two languages)	Portuguese: 3 English: 7 German: 6 Latin: 2	1 2 2 1	Portuguese: 3 French: 3 English: 2	2 2 2	Portuguese: 3 English: 2 French: 1	3 2 1
Levels	Middle school: 1 2 High school: 4 Both levels: 3	1 2 0 3	Both levels: 4	3	High school: 2 Both levels: 1	2 1
Years teaching	16 to 25: 2 More than 25: 7	0 3	16 to 25: 1 More than 25: 3	1 2	16 to 25: 1 More than 25: 2	1 2

Table 2. Our sample

For our sample group, we selected participants with different professional profiles, regarding the languages they teach, the contexts where they work, their age and their professional and academic careers. In short, we have chosen those who have experiences ‘in common, but also some of their own different experiences’ (Amado 2009: 186 – our translation). By choosing a group of differentiated individuals, we intended to build a heuristic model, capable of covering different points of view on what could be an ICC approach in educational settings.

Given the purpose of the research and the narrative nature of the data, we chose to conduct a *semi-inductive* content analysis (Maroy 1997). Therefore, our analysis framework articulates an *emic* perspective, with categories drawn from data, and an *etic* one, with categories drawn from literature. The *etic* categories were only applied when they were pertinent to describe teacher discourse i.e. our categories of analysis were defined based on what teachers wrote in their *Professional Portfolios* and said during the interviews, but they were shaped by existing theoretical knowledge of ICC models (Arasaratnam 2006; Byram 1997; Dervin 2010; Spitzberg & Changnon 2009). This theoretical knowledge helped us not only to designate the categories that compose the ICC model, but also to give them some theoretical substance. Consequently, our ICC model corresponds to an inductive/grounded model (Strauss & Corbin 1997), enabling us to go beyond a mere description of teachers’ experiences and perceptions of ICC leading to a more comprehensive explanation of the phenomena in question. Finally, as regards data treatment, we combined qualitative and quantitative approaches, bearing in mind the identification of the components that our participants value most in ICC, considering that ‘a characteristic is more frequently mentioned as more important is to the individual’ (Quivy & Campenhout 2008: 228 – our translation). Therefore during our analysis, we account for the ‘content units’ (CU) related to each category and subcategory, and include some statistical analysis of CU.

A heuristic model of ICC based on teachers’ views

The concept of ICC: what is it?

According to the participants in our study, ICC seems to integrate three components (affective, cognitive and praxeologicalⁱⁱⁱ) which are seen as ‘very interlinked’ [CF3-I], strongly ‘connected’ [OF2-I], and are viewed together as a whole:

‘Without an affective dimension we do not learn as much as we can(...) the predisposition to(...) it has to start in the person/^{iv}we have to be active/we have to interact/we have to take initiative/we have to(...) be the starting motor - right ?(...) and then we have to know’ [CF3-I].

In fact, these teachers conceptualize ICC as a highly complex competence, related to the intrinsic complexity of the composite world in which we live (Byram 2009; Dervin 2010; Kim 2009; Varro 2007):

‘The communicator is a person(...) so right from the start there are a lot of things on the line which are related to the individual himself(...) and there are an entire set of competences that he has to put into action to communicate(...) with all his complexity as a human being(...) living his reality inserted into a context(...) communicating with other individuals(...) so it is very complex(...) so ICC has to integrate several dimensions’ [CF2-I].

When asked to reflect on the importance of each components and how they relate to each other, the affective component was identified as the spark for ICC, responsible for the activation and development of the remaining components:

‘The affective component should be at the base/and then these two/cognitive and praxeological components/should be in unison/because it’s necessary that the person in fact wants to learn research and take the initiative to do research and learn how to relate to all of this’ [CF3-I].

This tendency to emphasize the affective component is consistent not only with participants’ perceptions regarding the nature of ICC, but also with the theoretical knowledge of the field, namely with Arasaratnam’s (2006), Candelier’s (2000) and Spitzberg & Changnon’s (2009) models. Indeed, 377 of the CU identified concern the affective component. The participants also place a great deal of importance on the praxeological component (Arasaratnam 2006; Candelier 2000; Hunter, White & Godbey’s model, cf. Spitzberg & Changnon 2009), with 351 CU, calling attention to the experiential and operative aspects of this competence. The least valued component seems to be the cognitive one (with 211 CU), which does not mean that participants do not attribute importance to it. In fact, they realise that this component is only functional if the other two are solidly developed: *‘What does it matter if this one is<points to the cognitive component>very big if the other two do not work?/I think that this one does not work(...) it does not matter if you know a lot if you do not know how to communicate or how to be’ [PI2-I].* This cognitive component is also recognized and given value in literature, namely in Hunter, White & Godbey’s model (cf. Spitzberg & Changnon 2009).

We might add that our teachers, although tending to highlight the importance of the affective component, recognize that *‘the three are important/depending on the contexts’ [OF1-I]* and *‘on the targets’ [PI2-I]*, which is, in fact, in accordance with the major models in ICC, such as those from Byram (1997); Dervin (2010); Jandt (1998); and Ogay (2000). Table

3, constructed according to the semi-inductive procedure mentioned above, represents our participants' perceptions about the ICC concept, namely the meaning associated with each component considered, and the CU associated to each category and subcategory of analysis^v:

	Categories	Subcategories
1. Affective component – 377CU	<u>1.1. Relationship with Others – 182UC</u>	a) respect for Others – 61CU; b) interest, open-mindedness, curiosity towards Others – 54CU; c) humility – 25CU; d) sensitivity to similarity – 12CU; e) solidarity – 12CU; f) acceptance (within the limits of the legacy of human rights) – 9CU; g) sensitivity to difference - 9CU
	<u>1.2. Relationship with the self – 75CU</u>	a) desire to learn, to be updated – 31CU; b) safety, confidence in oneself, comfort in one's own identity – 23CU; c) respect for oneself, for one's culture – 12CU; d) pride in your own linguistic and cultural identity – 9CU.
	<u>1.3. Relationship with the communication situation – 71CU</u>	a) availability/predisposition to communicate with Others – 54CU; b) effort/commitment to the success of the interaction – 17CU.
	<u>1.4. Relationship with the languages – 35CU</u>	a) liking for, interest in languages – 11CU; b) unafraid of making mistakes when speaking in a foreign language – 11CU; c) equitable view of languages – 8CU; d) relational view of languages – 5CU.
2. Praxeological Component – 351CU	<u>2.1. Personal skills – 185CU</u>	a) critical cultural awareness, decentring – 28CU; b) capacity to control anxiety, tolerance of ambiguity – 24CU; c) empathy – 23CU; d) adaptation – 21CU; e) kindness, sympathy – 18CU; f) ability to captivate – 17CU; g) good disposition, positive mindset – 15CU; h) prudence, tact – 15CU; i) cosmopolitanism, cultural pluralism – 6CU; j) discretion – 5CU; k) ability to receive people well, hospitality – 4CU; l) sense of justice, equality – 4CU; m) capacity to be assertive, clear and direct – 3CU; n) autonomy, spirit of initiative – 2CU.
	<u>2.2. Linguistic and communicative skills – 108CU</u>	a) communicating, being understood – 30CU; b) managing the subject's repertoire – 24CU; c) perception/understanding Others – 18CU; d) managing interaction – 14CU; e) communicating in a common language – 12CU; f) listening – 6CU; g) establishing bridges between languages – 4CU.
	<u>2.3. Cognitive skills – 56CU</u>	a) capacity to discover, learn and update plurilingual and intercultural repertoire – 32CU; b) capacity to re/build perceptions about peoples and languages – 19CU; c) ability to learn languages – 5CU.
3. Cognitiv	<u>3.1. Knowledge of Others – 68CU</u>	a) knowledge of Others' cultural context and their behavioural patterns – 42CU; b) awareness of the relativism of the perceptions of people, languages and cultures – 26CU.

<u>3.2. Knowledge of the interaction process – 54CU</u>	a) subject’s plurilingual and intercultural repertoire – 30CU; b) awareness of languages and of the interaction context – 22CU; c) knowledge of processes for managing interaction – 2CU.
<u>3.3. Knowledge of Self – 39CU</u>	a) self-instruction – 15CU; b) self-concept – 11CU; c) self-discovery – 6CU; d) aware of intra-linguistic and intra-cultural diversity – 4CU; e) aware of the perceptions of their culture – 3CU.
<u>3.4. General culture – 26CU</u>	a) historical, social and political circumstances – 16CU; b) geography – 10CU.
<u>3.5. Knowledge of concepts – 20CU</u>	a) awareness of the political and educational value of the ICC concept – 13CU; b) awareness of the interrelationship between language, culture and identity – 7CU.

Table 3. The complex nature of ICC

We now focus on each ICC component, highlighting the participants’ words regarding the categories and subcategories most valued in their discourses. We start with the affective component, the one they appreciated the most, with 377 CU (Table 3). Participants give greater importance to attitudes towards Others, thus, approximately half of the CU (182) regarding this component is related to the category “Relationship with Others”, namely the subcategory ‘*respect for Other’s cultural identity*’ [CF2-IP], ‘*for their values and practices*’ [CF1-IP], with 61CU, highlighting that it is important to ‘*first understand how to respect others*’ [PI3-I]. “Interest, open-mindedness and curiosity towards others” is considered a crucial subcategory, with 54 CU, integrating attitudes such as: ‘*the desire to discover each other’s «world»*’ [CF2-IP]; and ‘*being open to others and to their cultures*’ [OF1-IP]. The “Relationship with the self” is also frequently mentioned, namely the subcategory “desire to learn and to be updated” (31CU) i.e. ‘*the desire to know more and more*’ [CF2-I], recognizing that ‘*the more I extend my knowledge/the more I’m aware that I know absolutely nothing*’ [CF3-I]. Concerning the category “Relationship with the communication situation”, the most mentioned subcategory was ‘*enthusiasm for communication*’ [CF3-IP] i.e. the willingness and predisposition to communicate with Others, with 54 CU: ‘*it is interesting to communicate with other people(...) even using a language that may not exist(...) it is interesting to try to find out what people think*’ [PI1-I]. Another category emerged from the participants’ views, namely the “Relationship with languages”, which concerns attitudes towards languages and their use in multilingual and intercultural communication, coupled with a relational view of languages, conceptualising ‘*languages as bridges (...) and not as isolated islands*’ [PI1-IP].

Regarding the praxeological component, “Personal skills” is the subcategory most emphasized (185 CU), not only in what this category in particular concerns, but also in what the entire model of ICC concerns (Table 3). The high valorisation of these personal skills and the references to the self within other components (“relationship with the self” and “knowledge of self”) point to a strong personal embedded vision of ICC.

For our teachers, ‘*the development of a questioning, analytical and critical position towards ourselves and our surroundings*’ [CF1-IP] i.e. a “critical cultural awareness” (Byram 1997), with 28 CU, is crucial for intercultural dialogue, because ‘*we cannot be with others in a really open way if we are always thinking that we are superior*’ [PI1-I]. Another personal skill, also highly valued, with 24 CU, is “anxiety control”: ‘*it is only possible if people lose the fear/if they break down the barriers*’ [CF2-I]. Our participants seem to recognize the

concept of cultural relativism and the importance of dealing with it: *'we cannot expect the other to behave as we want/as we think is correct/because(...) he could have another idea'* [OF3-I].

"Linguistic and communicative skills" (Candelier 2000) was also frequently mentioned by the participants. The ability to communicate, with 30 CU, was central for our participants, who define ICC as *'the ability to(...) make yourself understood/acting linguistically but also culturally'* [OF2-I], being a version of rendering *'communication with people from other cultures successful/speaking other languages'* [OF3-I]. To make this communication possible, they consider that we have to *'use several languages'* [OF1-IP] i.e. to manage our intercultural and plurilingual repertoire (24 CU), a subcategory strongly related to the development of plurilingualism and ICC:

'Imagine that we are communicating in Portuguese/I will not require my interlocutor to speak Portuguese correctly/if he makes some statements in Portuguese I will take advantage of what he says and I will give some tips(...) I think that speaking a language correctly is not the important thing in this kind of communication' [PI1-I].

The "cognitive skills" are less present, and the overwhelming majority of CU identified referred to the ability to discover knowledge and update plurilingual and cultural repertoires (32 CU), as the statement below shows:

'I do not know that it is so important that we know things about others in advance/I think that what is important is that we get to know each other during interaction(...) maybe the best thing to do is to build an image(...) or gain knowledge of the reality in front of you based in the interaction that you establish' [OF3-I].

This subcategory is closely related, on the one hand, to the willingness to update and the capacity to manage the subject's repertoires and, on the other hand, to the dynamics of ICC development, as we explain below.

The last mentioned component was the cognitive one, with 211 CU (Table 3). The sphere of Others, in this case, knowledge of Others, namely the subcategory related to the knowledge of their cultural contexts and patterns of behaviour, is strongly valued (42 CU). In the teacher's views:

'Openness to Others is not enough/really knowing Others is crucial(...) knowing him/as a human being inserted in his cultural context/which is naturally and substantially different from ours(...) so I think that this knowledge is half of the communication.' [PI3-I].

The other subcategory, "Awareness of the relativism of the perceptions of people, languages and cultures", is also very present in participants' discourses, with 26 CU. They recognize that perceptions *'could be or not be confirmed'* [CF2-IP], *'we should see them as an imprint(...) as the result of a set of traits that people have/in the way they organize themselves/in the way they related to each other(...) in the way they live'* [OF3-I], but they are also aware that *'although some persons could have some characteristics that correspond to those representations/it happens everywhere'* [PI3-I]. This awareness is in accordance with a postmodernist perspective, which views the intercultural communicator as being 'fully aware that every individual(...) is multiple and complex but that every (inter-)locutor can adapt their

discourse to contexts and/or interlocutors by presenting a group or a national identity in order to please, confirm a representation or defend themselves' (Dervin 2010: 13).

Although teachers recognize that the "knowledge of the Self" plays a crucial role in intercultural interaction (39 CU), in fact, in their discourses, they pay more attention to knowledge of others:

'I was almost only seeing the other person and I forgot about myself(...) maybe because I had to BE outside of myself to go to the other side and therefore I did not remember that I was also an important part of this interaction because without me it does not exist/without my representations(...) without what I build and what I am it does not happen' [OF3-I].

Within the category "Knowledge on the interaction process", the participants emphasize, once more, the plurilingual dimension of ICC, referring to their own plurilingual and intercultural repertoire (30 CU), recognizing the importance of *'a good knowledge of the others' linguistic code(...) as well as the socio-cultural references framing their discourse'* [CF2-IP], *'which presuppose the development of a plurilingual and multicultural competence'* [CF1-IP] (Byram 1997; Candelier 2000). Our participants also seem to state that linguistic knowledge is not enough, assigning an important role to the interactional context, with 22 CU: *'a good knowledge of others' linguistic code? Reasonable/at least if it could not be good/it depends(...) on the person's social position(...) on the context'* [CF2-I], because, in this kind of interaction, *'language is(...) perhaps a detail in relationships between human beings'* [PI2-I].

Also listed is conceptual knowledge (19 CU), regarding both the ICC concept and the concept of "language". As regards the ICC concept, our participants refer to its strong educational and political relevance, with 12 CU:

'I think that intercultural competence is in fact essential to language teachers but it is essential to everyone(...) because it is not only language teacher who communicate/obviously he has a responsibility(...) that consists of the individual education/to use this competence then within his personal intercultural relationships(...) but I think that it is(...)universally pertinent' [OF3-I].

They recognize also the close relationship between language, culture and identity in 7 CU, stating that *'languages are cultures'* [CF1-IP] and that *'when I use a language(...) it is a huge heritage/the language and culture couldn't be dissociated'* [CF2-I]. Finally, there are still some references to knowledge of a more general context (26 CU), in particular to geography (10 CU) and the political, historical and social circumstances associated with various peoples (16 CU).

In short, according to our data, ICC seems to be a multidimensional competence which is based on a complex network with three defined components (affective, cognitive and praxeological). These components, and the attitudes, knowledge and abilities included in them, are strongly interrelated in a recursive and integrated logic. Furthermore, according to this model proposal, the cultural and linguistic dimensions seem to have found a balance in the relevance given to the subject's intercultural and plurilingual repertoire. Finally, along with the linguistic and cultural dimensions, teachers value yet another dimension, that of the

Self, which is visible not only in the presence of the self in all components, but mainly in the emphasis given to "personal skills".

ICC dynamics and development: how does it develop?

Regarding the developmental dynamics of ICC, our participants considered it *'something that not only involves the experiences we've had/it will always(...) go forward and increasingly update'* [OF3-I] i.e. for them, ICC is conceptualized according to Bronfenbrenners' perspective (2002), which shaped our TP, as being constantly updated and built upon from the subject's experiences:

'perhaps intercultural communication/isn't necessarily only using a repertoire/that already exists(...) it is also/building it and adding / increasing it(...) taking advantage of other contributions that we receive/that emerge during the interaction' [OF3-I].

This evolutionary conceptualisation is also in accordance with some descriptive models of ICC already published, such as Bennett's model (cf. Ogay 2000; Spitzberg & Changnon 2009), where several levels of development are identified, from ethnocentric attitudes to an increasingly more aware and solid ethnorelativism. The main objective of this process, according to our participants, is to lead individuals to *'learn more in terms of culture and learn more about dealing with others'* [PI2-IP], that is why they place so much importance on the desire to learn (affective component), to self-instruct (cognitive component) and the ability to discover knowledge and to be updated (praxeological component), as explained above.

Thus, once again, the best metaphor to represent this ICC dynamic and development is the spiral, represented in Figure 3:

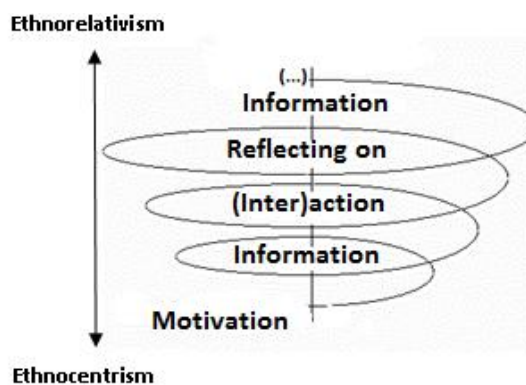


Figure 3. ICC dynamics and development (teachers' perspectives)

In the participants' words, the affective component of ICC seems to act as a *propeller*: *'firstly/it is my open-mindedness/my willingness to want to know more and then to be able to get by and finally to learn'* [OF2-I], that is why, in Figure 3, motivation is on the basis of the developmental spiral. It is perfectly in consonance with Deardorff's perspective (cf. Spitzberg

& Changnon 2009), where the affective component is the *spark* for ICC development and the base for furthering the other two components: cognitive and praxeological.

According to our data, ICC development, triggered by motivation, implies three phases which are interconnected in the same spiralled logic of development as shown in Figure 3. The information phase is where individuals deepen their knowledge, reflecting on themselves and their need for information, as subjects of language and culture, primarily by expanding the cognitive component of their ICC with the aim of better preparing themselves for intercultural encounters: *'some baggage of some knowledge is indispensable to being an intercultural communicator'* [CF2-IP]. As theoretical knowledge is insufficient for a sustainable development of ICC, after this first phase it is important, according to the teachers, to participate effectively in plurilingual and intercultural encounters (in person or virtually), in order to learn to behave interculturally. This is the (inter)action phase, developing ICC in action, within an action-oriented approach (European Council 2002; Delors et al. 2000): *'for this competence/the ideal would be to have real contact/travelling(...) at a distance through email with people they know/or to do an exchange programme'* [CF2-I]. From the participants' viewpoint, these two phases, although crucial, may not contribute to the full development of ICC if individuals do not reflect on their learning experiences. Thus, the reflection phase covers all relevant issues, consisting of self-analysis of intercultural communication encounters and identifying the strong and weak points of their intercultural profiles in order to become aware of the aspects that they wish to improve. This is the phase that prepares individuals to start a new cycle in information-(inter)action-reflection, with the aim of continuing to develop ICC: *'it is one thing to read/and another thing to integrate/another to be aware/since I need some time to mature/and to understand'* [OF2-I]. Therefore, our participants seem to be in agreement with King & Baxter Magolda (cf. Spitzberg & Changnon 2009), who identified information/observation and interaction as the *gears* of this process, but they recognize another crucial *gear*, the reflection one, within an approach that is simultaneously experiential and reflective.

Pathways for teacher education on ICC

In this final section, we summarize the conclusions drawn above, but this time in conjunction with the TP implemented, in order to understand for which training pathways these conclusions are relevant. According to our findings, working towards developing ICC is best begun with the affective component, promoting positive attitudes towards Others, the individuals themselves, plurilingual and intercultural communication situations, and languages. In fact, our teachers show awareness of the importance of this component for developing ICC in their professional settings, as the following statement shows:

'We have to always show respect(...) how could I foster certain values if I do not demonstrate having them? certain values? certain attitudes?(...) we should/even more than anyone else ?oster it in our students/this predisposition towards foreign languages / to communicate(...) to intercomprehension' [CF2-I].

Therefore it seems that teachers who have attended our TP recognize the importance of one of our four training axes, the "Awareness of...", and also the pertinence of the *Analytical Strategies*, as evident from this comment: *'the teacher(...) who is open towards a diverse universe of languages and cultures is also able to transmit this to his students'* [CF1-I]. Thus, they recognize and value the *personal* and

social/political dimensions of ICC – a perspective that emphasizes the pertinence of working this aspect into teacher training programs.

On the other hand, as we demonstrated in the previous section, our participants also value the praxeological component of ICC: *'for me/it is essential to feel/an intercultural communicator/has to firstly feel/feel live/live on site'* [CF1-I]. This perspective is closely related to an action-oriented approach i.e. of (inter)action with Others, which points to the pertinence of the two operational training axes of our TP, the “Communicative and Intercultural doing” and the “Professional doing”, and also of the *Dialogical strategies* underlying our TP. Additionally, valuing this praxeological component is in keeping with the importance traditionally given to didactic dimension in teacher education.

Although not very valued, the cognitive component is also referred to as one of the ICC components. However, more than the knowledge that is brought to the communication event, teachers emphasize the ability to acquire knowledge in a situation that increases verbal repertoires. In addition, given the desire to learn as well as to know oneself, particularly where self-concept and self-instruction are concerned, it seems that teachers also acknowledge the relevance of reflection for one's growth process, recognizing the importance not only of the “Awareness of...” axe of the TP, but also that of “Reflection on...”, providing functionality to activities related to *Reflection* and to *Discovery strategies*.

Thus, we can say that the participants recognize the importance of developing training paths based on training axes and strategies such as those that form the basis for our TP, in order to 'oil the gears' between the research, experiences, and reflection phases that, due to their perspective, incorporate the dynamics of professional development in ICC (Figures 1). One of the participants clearly indicated as an added value in the training path proposed this balanced relationship between what she calls the "stage of understanding the concepts" (research/information), the "experimentation phase" and the "reflection" phase:

'Obviously there was that part of understanding concepts/but it wasn't extremely elongated nor tedious(...) and there was a strong application component/experimentation(...) and of reflection on that experimentation/because I think that this is the most interesting part/in terms of having the opportunity to operationalise what we have learned/and verify up to what point it is suitable or not how can we reformulate(...) thus assessing and then seeing what gains we have made with it and what horizons we have opened up because I believe that is MORE it is more through the experimental part' [OF3-I].

In short, according to participants' perceptions, it seems that teacher education in ICC should invest heavily in the affective dimension of this competence. To this end, fostering an appreciation for cultural and linguistic diversity, as well as the willingness to participate in plurilingual and intercultural encounters and adopting a didactic approach to diversity are the *gateways* that facilitate the process of developing personal and professional competences in ICC. In addition, teachers seem to highly value the co-existence of theoretical and experimentation moments, both in terms of plurilingual and intercultural contact (virtual and/or in person), such as pedagogic-didactic experimentation (Bastos & Araújo e Sá 2008a, 2008b). Teachers also highlight the reflective character of the TP, recognizing it as an asset. Thus, it is important not to overlook the reflexive dimension, providing the trainees with the opportunity to self-analyze, to define their own training projects and to monitor their professional development process in a more conscious and reflective way.

Although it is not our purpose to generalize these ideas to all educational contexts due to the small sample of our study and its relative homogeneity, nonetheless, because of the inductive nature of our results, this study may help us to understand which characteristics TP on ICC could have which are able to meet teachers' opportunities and needs. In fact, the conclusions were based on the perceptions of teachers who attended our TP, consequently the results increase our knowledge of ICC, by adding to those studies already developed on the area, with a study directly from the perspective of those who work in the field - in this case from language teachers.

However, we recognize that it is just one more setting and we consider that it would be interesting to see how language teachers with other personal, professional and academic characteristics, from different regional, national or even continental contexts, teaching other languages to other learners, would conceive of the nature and developmental dynamics of ICC and how they would react to a TP based on training principles similar to ours, with similar purposes.

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Notes

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ⁱⁱ We have used the following codes to refer to the participants in the study:

- those who attended stage1: CF1, CF2 and CF3;
- those who attended stage2: OF1, OF2 and OF3;
- those who attended the entire TP: PI1, PI2 and PI3.

After the codes to refer the participants in the study, we use other codification to identify the source of the quotations: IP to data from their “Intercultural Profile” and I to data from the interviews.

ⁱⁱⁱ *Praxeological* dimension refers to a more operative dimension of ICC, regarding the abilities / skills to interact with people from other cultures, using other languages.

^{iv} This sign was used during the interviews transcription to signal a small pause on the interviewed discourse.

^v Please note that de numbers on the table correspond to the CU identified during the data analysis process. The numbers on the column related to the three main categories (affective, praxeological and cognitive) are the sum of all the subcategories’ CU and the residual CU related with general aspects of each category, without connection with the subcategories: 14CU related to the affective component; 2CU related to the praxeological one; and 5CU related to the cognitive one.