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Culture in interaction: What micro-analysis of real life interactions can contribute to the study of intercultural communication.

To demonstrate the importance of a discourse approach to the understanding of intercultural communication (ICC), this paper will present a conversation analytical interpretation of interculturality. This ethnomethodological approach will be shown to offer an alternative perspective on ICC, by explicating what people *actually* say and do (as opposed to what they are purported to do) in interaction.

Using recordings of naturally-occurring talk, the role of culture and cultural identities in interaction will be explored. Two collections of data will be drawn upon: video recordings of international university students chatting in their kitchen, and audio recordings of English language Skypecasts (multinational, multi-participant online voice-based chatrooms). Examples from these corpora, as well as from previous research (e.g. Mori 2003; Nishizaka 1995), will be used to show: (1) how the relevance of interculturality in interaction can change on a moment-by-moment basis, (2) that culture and cultural identities can be used by interlocutors as interactional resources and (3) that cultures and cultural practices are not treated as static entities by interactants, but are contested, negotiated and co-constructed through talk.

It will be argued that an alternative perspective on ICC can be offered by such fine-detailed examination of interactants' actual behaviour. From this view, culture and cultural identities are not assumed to be omnirelevant in communication. Instead, they can be viewed as resources upon which interlocutors can draw to achieve social and interactional goals. Further, interculturality can be seen to be an on-going, dynamic phenomenon both shaped by, and shaping, communication. It will also be argued that it is essential to consider such an approach when teaching ICC, not least because, in order to fully understand interaction, one should examine what is demonstrably relevant to those engaged in it.

References

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Nishizaka, A. (1995). The interactive constitution of interculturality: How to be a Japanese with words. *Human studies*, 18, 301-326.