

**BAAL/CUP seminar:
Key Themes in Intercultural Communication Pedagogy
9th–10th July 2009**

Transcript

Tony Young

From the seminar today and yesterday I think some of the major issues that have emerged are the idea that it's possible to have an ecumenical approach to ideas of culture – you can take many different positions on it and still come up with something useful. But our main focus has been on pedagogy and, you know, what a lot of people have been saying is that it's extremely important that we keep things grounded in the idea that this is something that we make people aware of and better at. It's all too easy to get lost into debate about exactly what the nature of culture is and I think we've managed to avoid that. We've kept things pretty focused on teaching and learning and it's been a very useful experience.

Jane Woodin

Key issues that are for me very important are the relationship between action and theory and that we always need both of them there, and a person-oriented focus as well, which is quite different perhaps from many other disciplines, in that the intercultural person and the personal development of somebody – whether they're the learner or the teacher or the practitioner – is actually really central as well.

Helen Spencer-Oatey

What conceptual frameworks do we have to underpin what we are really aiming at. In other words: what is intercultural competence? What are the components of intercultural competence? Are they different for different types of students or adults or people working in different contexts?

Adam Brandt

In the approach that we're using, people don't actually behave any differently in intercultural communication, so is it something that we need to topicalize ourselves, or is it something that we should say: let's look at the people that are interacting and see whether it's important to them that this interaction is intercultural.

Liang Wang

We need to make a distinction between teaching the course as intercultural communication and to develop an intercultural approach which is embedded in language-learning programmes.

Mike Byram

Well, what I think is the most important thing in teaching intercultural communication is the, in a sense, lack of theory and practice in the affective. In other words: there's lots of pedagogy and methods and so on on teaching cognitive understanding, but so what do we do about affective development.

Richard Fay

The first major issue is that of an essentialized understanding of culture and challenging that. The second one really is about the challenge for intercultural pedagogy in the UK. Because the UK – with its, I suppose, its political position in the world, economic position in the world and also its English language position in the world – is in a different position from other places. So intercultural pedagogy in the UK is fundamentally different from intercultural pedagogy in, say, Spain or Greece or in China.

Robin Cranmer

The first issue that really strikes me is how you persuade policy makers in schools, in universities and wherever, that intercultural skills are actually important – that they deserve a place in the curriculum. A problem, to my perception, is student vulnerability. I think that dealing with intercultural issues brings up a whole range of personal issues for many students. They're challenged in ways they're not used to being in the educational

process. And how you support them through that process whilst still challenging their cultural preconceptions.

Valerie Hobbs

The students that I have, for example, if I tell them one of the goals of becoming interculturally aware is developing a critical sense of self – while they can either accept that or reject that, I can't impose on them this notion of criticality. So understanding that it's OK to either accept or reject a cultural assumption for me is an important issue and one that is actually not very much explored in the literature.