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## From intercultural to transcultural communication

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### ABSTRACT

The fluidity of communicative practices in current intercultural communication research raises difficult questions about how we understand core concepts in the field. Links between linguistic resources, other modes, and cultures are created in situ suggesting that relationships between 'named' languages and cultures cannot be taken for granted. We frequently see emergent cultural practices and references which are neither part of any one culture or, crucially, necessarily in-between cultures. Thus, the traditional metaphor of 'inter' for intercultural communication is no longer adequate and such communication is better approached as transcultural communication where borders are transcended, transgressed and in the process transformed.



ความสับสนไหลของการสื่อสารที่ปราศ ภาวนาวิจัยการสื่อสารระหว่างวัฒนธรรมก่อให้เกิดคำถามต่อแนวคิด เนื่องจากการเชื่อมโยงระหว่างทรัพยากรทางภาษา แบบวิธีสื่อสาร และวัฒนธรรมที่อุบัติขึ้นแสดงให้เห็นว่าเราไม่สามารถที่กักตึงความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างภาษาและวัฒนธรรมเองได้ เรามักพบการปฏิบัติและการอ้างอิงทางวัฒนธรรมที่ไม่ได้เป็นส่วนหนึ่งของวัฒนธรรม หรืออยู่ระหว่างวัฒนธรรมใด ดังนั้นคำว่า "ระหว่าง" วัฒนธรรมจึงไม่เหมาะสม และจะดีกว่าหากใช้การสื่อสารข้ามผ่านวัฒนธรรม ซึ่งพร้อมแดนใดถูกก้าวข้ามและเปลี่ยนไป

### KEYWORDS

Intercultural communication; transcultural communication; trans theories; intercultural awareness; applied linguistics

The superdiversity of contemporary societies and social spaces has now almost become a cliché in sociolinguistics and intercultural communication research. We are able to instantly connect with people around the world via digital communication, cultural forms and practices can achieve rapid global circulation through social media, our workplaces and educational institutions are often part of transnational networks, and urban centres are typically highly multicultural and multi-lingual. Before the Covid pandemic physical international travel for work and leisure, as well as social and economic necessity was a major part of many people's lives. While the pandemic shut down some of these physical global connections, it also underscored just how interconnected all societies are and increased our virtual connections. The debate on whether these connections and the resulting cultural and linguistic diversity are the continuation of age-old processes (e.g. Blommaert, 2010; Canagarajah, 2013) or a fundamentally new phase of social spaces and interactions (e.g. Kramsch, 2021; Scholte, 2008), is beyond the scope of this paper. Nonetheless, the consequences of this diversity and complexity in social spaces for our understanding of core concepts in intercultural communication such as language, communication, identity, community, and culture, have yet to be fully considered. This is perhaps surprising given that this superdiversity is not exotic or unusual but rather ubiquitous and ordinary (Baker & Sangiamchit, 2019; Lee & Dovchin, 2020).

In this paper I aim to explore transcultural communication as a concept that is well-suited to investigating such fluid, dynamic and complex connections and interactions. However, the goal is not to

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argue for a ‘paradigm shift’ that dismisses previous research in language and intercultural communication, but rather to extend the field and open new areas for exploration and discussion. As such transcultural communication will be situated in its historical and disciplinary context. This begins with an examination of earlier conceptions of transculturality from a range of disciplines. Next, critical approaches to intercultural communication research will be considered, particularly interculturality and third space or third place as being directly relevant to understanding transcultural communication. Lastly, trans theories in applied linguistics, most notably translanguaging, will be drawn on as informing transcultural communication perspectives. Equally important, is my own position in this discussion as a researcher of intercultural communication and Global Englishes, specifically English as a lingua franca (ELF), and the inevitable influence this has had on the ideas outlined here. Just as significant is my position as a white, male, native speaker of English based in a prestigious Anglophone university. While much of my career and research has been related to the ‘global South’ and attempts to decentre the dominance of the Anglophone world in applied linguistics and ELT, the position of privilege from which I write must be acknowledged.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, my linguistic and cultural background will inevitably give rise to ‘blind spots’ in sources of knowledge.

Nonetheless, it was my experiences with researching language and culture in interactions through English used as a lingua franca<sup>2</sup> in multilingual scenarios that highlighted, for me, the limitations of current thinking around the ‘inter’ of intercultural communication. What such interactions showed was the frequency with which linguistic and cultural borders were crossed in a manner that was not adequacy accounted for through notions such as code-switching, hybridity and third place (e.g. Baker, 2015). In many cases it was not easy to identify the languages and cultures participants were supposedly ‘switching’ from or ‘in-between’. A short example may help to illustrate these points. This is drawn from a study on the use of English and multilingualism at an English-medium (EMI) college in Tokyo (Ishikawa, 2021). Hanako and Hanna (pseudonyms) were born and raised in Japan and the US, respectively and they are discussing breakfast arrangements via mobile phone texts.

### It’s not breakfast food (Baker & Ishikawa, 2021, pp. 146–147)

[translation in brackets]

01 Hanako: i recommend はなまるうどんのサラダうどん

(Hanamaru Udon no sarada udon)

[i recommend Hanamaru Udon’s salad udon noodles]

02 Hanna: It’s not breakfast food ...

03 Hanako: its good tho

04 Hanna: What about Platform Café?

05 Hanako: 行ったことない (ittakoto nai)

[I’ve never been there]

06 Hanna: I’ll go then

07 They have yummy breakfast food ~

08 Hanako: pictures

09 i think サラダうどん (sarada udon) is perfect breakfast tho lol

[i think salad udon is perfect breakfast tho lol]

10 Hanna: 忘れた (wasureta) ... just I got boiled egg and toast

[I forgot ... just I got boiled egg and toast]

11 それおかしいよ (sore okashii yo)

[I think that’s strange]

12 Hanako: おかしくないよ (okashiku nai yo)

[i don’t think it’s strange]

13 Hanna: おかしい (okashii)

[It’s strange]

14 Hanako: healthy healthy

15 Hanna: I usually just eat a みかん (mikan) at breakfast, so I’m very happy to have breakfast food ~ ~ ~

[I usually just eat a satsuma orange at breakfast, so I’m very happy to have breakfast food ~ ~ ~]

On first reading the most obvious feature is the use of two ‘named’ languages, Japanese and English. However, English is used as a multi lingua franca since neither participant shares an L1, it does not conform to ‘standard’ Anglophone varieties of English, and it is embedded in wider multilingual communicative practices (Jenkins, 2015). Similarly, Japanese is used in a ‘non-standard’ manner and while, given the physical location of the participants, we might expect to find Japanese spoken, the multilingual and multicultural nature of Tokyo and the setting of an EMI college suggest that multilingualism, translanguaging (explained below) and transcultural communication will be common (Baker & Ishikawa, 2021). Moreover, not all of the language use is easily identifiable with particular national languages, for instance ‘Platform Café’ on line 4 and ‘lol’ on line 9. While ‘lol’ may have its origins as an acronym for the English phrase ‘laugh out loud’, it is now a familiar phrase in many other languages. In addition, the use of other semiotic signs such as ‘~ ~ ~’ and ‘...’ are not attributable to a single named language. The content of the exchange ‘breakfast food’ is a topic that anyone familiar with language teaching will recognise as pervasive in text book introductions to cultural content and ‘difference’ and their focus on the five ‘fs’ of food, fashion, famous people, festivals, and flags. Yet the breakfast practices discussed here are considerably more complex than a national level comparison would suggest. Hanako begins by recommending salad udon (line 1) and while udon noodles are popular in Japan, they are also globally familiar and not unique to Japan. Furthermore, as Hanna suggests in line 2, it is unusual to have them as a breakfast food in Japan. Instead, eggs and toast is more common as well as being more globally ubiquitous. Finally, while みかん (satsuma orange) suggested by Hanna in line 15 is associated in Japan with the south of the country, orange juice is also a globally familiar breakfast drink. This short interaction shows the complexity of food culture and eating practices which are not easily attributable to one named national culture, despite often being regarded as an easy introduction to understanding ‘other’ cultures. It also illustrates the complexity of the relationship between cultural practices, linguistic and other semiotic resources in which connections between languages and cultures cannot be taken for granted. At the same time the topic of the exchange, arranging breakfast, is rather mundane and the fluidity of the cultural and linguistic practices and the accompanying need for flexibility is unremarked on by the participants.

In examples such as this the ‘inter’ of intercultural communication becomes problematic, since participants are not necessarily ‘in-between’ easily distinguishable cultures and languages. Instead, following the trans perspective outlined in this paper, we can view participants as drawing on repertoires of linguistic and other semiotic resources that do not, and need not, align with ideological categories of named languages. These repertoires of semiotic resources are intertwined with cultural references and practices that move through and across levels or scales (Canagarajah & De Costa, 2016), with multiple scales simultaneously present. Such communication can be characterised as transcultural communication ‘where interactants move through and across, rather than in-between, cultural and linguistic boundaries, thus, “named” languages and cultures can no longer be taken for granted and in the process borders become blurred, transgressed and transcended’ (Baker & Sangiamchit, 2019, p. 472). In the rest of this paper I will elucidate transcultural communication and its development in more detail, as well as suggesting implications for research and pedagogy.

## Transculturality

Although the ‘trans’ turn (Hawkins & Mori, 2018) in applied linguistics and intercultural communication research is recent,<sup>3</sup> trans theories and transculturality have a longer and more established history in other fields. Abu-Er-Rub et al. (2019) trace the term back to anthropology and the work of the Cuban ethnographer Fernando Ortiz in the 1940s. Ortiz used the term trans as a counter to static depictions of culture and nations and to highlight the complex and varied processes of colonisation and immigration that influenced the formation of Cuban culture. As Ortiz writes ‘The real history of Cuba is the history of its intermeshed transculturations’ (1995, p. 98 cited in Abu-Er-Rub et al., 2019, p. xxiv). However, according to Santos (2014), while Ortiz’s

transculturation focused on the positive changes and new ‘cultural constellations’ that the diverse immigrants to Cuba gave rise to, it failed to adequately account for the power differences between these different groups and the restrictions and inequalities that resulted from them. The power dimensions to transculturation are taken up more fully in post-colonial studies (e.g. Santos, 2014); particularly, in its most well-known formulation through the work of Mary Louise Pratt (2008). Pratt links transculturation to the idea of ‘contact zones’ which she describes as ‘social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination ... Transculturation is a phenomenon of the contact zone’ (Pratt, 2008, p. 7). As with Ortiz, Pratt highlights the complexity and hybridity of cultures, but also the key role of power and resistance in social relations and the possibility of new cultural forms emerging which transcend their cultural ‘origins’. Significantly, Pratt (1991) goes on to relate transculturation directly to language and literacy and the importance of recognising multilingualism, cultural mediation, and contact zones in pedagogy. As such transculturation is similar to the notions of third space or third place (Bhabha, 1994; Kramsch, 1993) and the idea of occupying a liminal space ‘in-between’ cultures (discussed in detail later). Yet, at the same time this approach also retains the idea of identifiable cultures that are being adapted and hybridised. As already suggested, hybridity is not adequate by itself for understanding all that we observe in transcultural communication.

The idea of the transcultural is further developed in anthropology through Appadurai’s (1996) theorisation of cultural flows and globalisation. This has been useful in conceptualising the expanding scale and complexity of social networks and the ‘flows’ of cultural practices and ideologies through these networks that result in an increased diversity, rather than homogenisation, of cultural practices and identifications. Through the concept of the ‘circulation of forms and the forms of circulation’ (2010, p. 9) Appadurai shows the limitations of earlier notions of hybridity, as in post-colonial approaches, and the need to look at new cultural practices and contexts that emerge from the multiple scales simultaneously present. In regard to the circulation of forms he writes:

we need to move decisively beyond existing models of creolization, hybridity, fusion, syncretism, and the like, which have largely been about mixture at the level of content. Instead, we need to probe the cohabitation of forms, ... because they actually produce new contexts through their peculiar inflection of each other. (Appadurai, 2010, p. 10)

In relation to the forms of circulation Appadurai (2010) proposes that these will involve a dynamic interplay of time, space, scale and speed. This results in disjunctions, differences and tensions and the need for negotiation, rather than hybridisation, at the local scale, ‘[i]t is this negotiation which creates the complex containers which further shape the actual contents of local practice’ (2010, p. 11). Similar ideas have been taken up in applied linguistics with Risager’s transnational flows (2006) and Pennycook’s (2007) transcultural flows that explore how languages and cultures flow across each other in global circulation. Like Appadurai, Pennycook underscores that the local is not subservient to the global:

[t]ranscultural flows therefore refer not merely to the spread of particular forms of culture across boundaries, or the existence of supercultural commonalities (cultural forms that transcend locality), but rather to the processes of borrowing, blending, remaking and returning, to processes of alternative cultural production. (2007, p. 6)

Also in agreement with Appadurai, Pennycook notes the inevitable and productive tensions this gives rise to, ‘[c]aught between fluidity and fixity, then, cultural and linguistic forms are always in a state of flux, always changing’ (2007, p. 8).

The philosopher Wolfgang Iser (1999) has provided an influential introduction to transculturality. He argues that interculturality and multiculturalism are problematic terms when looking at contemporary societies as they retain the idea of separate cultures interacting with each other. Iser proposes that ‘[c]ultures de facto no longer have the insinuated form of homogeneity and separateness. They have instead assumed a new form, which is to be called transcultural insofar

that it passes through classical cultural boundaries' (1999, p. 4). As such Welsch introduces some core features of transcultural perspectives such as networks of cultural connections and identities which transcend traditional geographical and national cultural boundaries. However, Welsch has been critiqued for an overly static view of culture that does not address the processes of cultural production and interaction (Abu-Er-Rub et al., 2019). Monceri (2019) has presented a more recent philosophical argument in favour of adopting transculturality over multiculturalism and interculturality. Monceri contends that transculturality goes beyond the intercultural perspective of connections between different identifiable cultures. Significantly, she also suggests that the trans prefix can open up new ways of thinking about the idea of culture itself and 'can also be understood in the meaning of "going beyond", that is to say that it is able at least to evoke the possibility to "trespass", or better "transgress", the borders of the very notion of "culture"' (2019, pp. 87–88). Furthermore, Monceri argues that such questioning of core concepts in intercultural communication is necessary in order to decolonise the field and move away from Western centric perspectives that set up a false dichotomy between the 'West' and the 'Other'.

Guilherme and Dietz (2015) discuss diverse perspectives on the notions of multicultural, intercultural and transcultural. They highlight the different uses to which these terms have been put in different disciplines and at different times, meaning that fixed definitions are hard to come by. Yet, they emphasise the importance of trying to be as precise as we can be in our use of each term given their importance in many contemporary research fields and wider social discourses. Guilherme and Dietz criticise post-colonial studies for limiting the transcultural to the translation of one cultural perspective to another and instead characterise the transcultural as related to multiple cultures and timescales simultaneously present with no clear borders (2015, p. 8). However, they do not advocate the use of any one term over another but rather suggest that a productive dialogue can be established between them. While it would be unproductive and ahistorical to dismiss research into the multicultural and the intercultural, there are some significant differences between inter and trans perspectives that need more explication than provided by Guilherme and Dietz. Furthermore, their association of the transcultural with etic and structural approaches in intercultural studies (2015, p. 16) is an unusual one and not one shared in other understandings of this term discussed in this paper.

One of the most ambitious approaches to transculturality, and the perspective most closely aligned with the perspective on transcultural communication proposed here, is that developed out of the interdisciplinary research collaborative the Cluster of Excellence 'Asia and Europe in a Global Context' at Heidelberg University (Abu-Er-Rub et al., 2019). Abu-Er-Rub et al. characterise transculturality as a theoretical concept, a methodology and a historical phenomenon of relationality (2019, p. xxiii). Cultures are approached as always relational, complex and dynamic 'entanglement, exchange, porosity and hybridization have always been an instrumental part of the ongoing definition and development of cultures' (2019, p. xxvi). As with transcultural communication the trans metaphor is adopted over the inter to indicate the transgression and transcendence of borders as part of transcultural processes. However, Abu-Er-Rub et al. (2019) acknowledge a potential paradox in this position in that transcending borders also presupposes the existence of those borders as part of culture (see also Baker & Ishikawa, 2021; Mori & Sanuth, 2018). They point out that the neither the third space nor liminality are able to resolve this paradox since such space is always defined 'in relation and opposition to the self-contained units it professes to replace' (Abu-Er-Rub et al., 2019, p. xxvi). The way out of this dilemma is to adopt processual and multiple perspectives in which both the creation of borders and differences, and the transcending of those borders and differences are viewed as core ongoing processes of cultural construction. This echoes the earlier characterisation of transcultural communication as moving through and across borders and in the process altering the very nature of those boundaries (Baker & Sangiamchit, 2019). Furthermore, transculturality is positioned as being in opposition to a methodological nationalism 'that implicitly or explicitly accepts nations as given entities, in, between, or towards which culture is said to have developed' (Abu-Er-Rub et al., 2019, p. xxvii). While nations, borders and difference are not denied,

they are seen as part of a process of construction that is neither hierarchical nor a priori to transcultural processes. Indeed, Abu-Er-Rub et al. (2019) argue that transcultural processes are historically deeper, and hence more universal cultural processes, compared to the more recent national cultural constructions. As suggested by this latter point, a transcultural methodology involves a diachronic perspective alongside multi-scaled views of culture, in which cultural practices and connections are seen as operating across multiple sites, times and speeds. Lastly, to adequately account for this complexity of transculturality Abu-Er-Rub et al. (2019) underscore the importance of transdisciplinary research teams across the humanities and social sciences. This bold transcultural stance is summarised by Abu-Er-Rub et al. (2019, p. xxxi) as follows:

Multiple temporalities and spatialities play a crucial role in transcultural approaches. Exploring moments and processes of transculturation in a diachronic and synchronic manner often means operating across regional and temporal, but also disciplinary, scales in such a way that relations and connectivities can be traced and brought into conversation.

In sum, transculturality has been through various iterations and while earlier conceptions retained the methodological nationalism positioning cultures between national cultural groupings, more recent theory has embraced a dynamic and complex perspective with cultural practices, forms and contexts operating at multiple spatiotemporal scales that transcend boundaries. Such approaches to the transcultural are commensurable with and aid in the elucidation of transcultural communication as proposed in this paper.

### Critical intercultural communication studies

Although transculturality has not had a substantial impact on intercultural communication research, some of the key notions addressed by transculturality have also been of concern to critical intercultural communication scholars. A comprehensive overview of all these is beyond the scope of this paper; however, I will focus on three areas of relevance to this discussion, third space, third place and interculturality. Third space, third place and to a lesser extent third culture, are terms that have been extensively used in intercultural communication research as alternatives to essentialist national culture and language associations (MacDonald, 2019; Zhou & Pilcher, 2019). Third space, as already noted, comes from post-colonial studies and the work of Bhabha (1994) and third place is most closely associated with Kramersch (1993) and intercultural language pedagogy. Bhabha's third space, much like Pratt's (2008) contact-zones examines how the colonised can re-interpret and appropriate cultural meanings from the 'centre', creating new hybridised cultural practices. Within intercultural communication and applied linguistics research this has typically been taken up to explore culturally hybridised identities and practices which operate between different cultures (MacDonald, 2019). Kramersch's third place (1993) is more concretely associated with the physical and virtual pedagogic spaces where language learners occupy a place that is neither part of the language users' first language and culture (L1/ C1) nor the target language and culture (L2/ C2). This results in what Kramersch calls 'cultural faultlines' (1993, p. 205) in which language users can create liminal and fluid linguistic and cultural practices.

However, third space and third place have been criticised for reproducing the very categories of national cultures that they are attempting to question (e.g. Baker, 2015; Holliday, 2011). By positing people 'in-between' specific cultures, methodological nationalism is maintained as the point of reference remains national cultures. Holliday (2011) refers to this as neo-essentialism in which the indelible intercultural line between 'our' culture and that of the 'others' is retained. Furthermore, participants in intercultural communication are capable of orientating to multiple cultural scales simultaneously without necessarily being 'between' any of them (Baker, 2015; Holliday, 2011). Additionally, the diversity and complexity of cultural practices and scales in intercultural and transcultural communication means that it is not always possible to identify which named cultures participants are supposedly 'between' (Baker, 2015). Finally, the interpretation of third space or third place in applied linguistic and intercultural communication research

has frequently failed to adequately account for the power structures which can limit the cultural identities and practices which participants may be able to adopt or adapt (MacDonald, 2019; Piller, 2017). Kramsch herself has been aware of the limitations of third place or third culture and critiqued the earlier binary distinctions between first and second cultures and languages, as well as the static nature of third place conceptualisations, writing that ‘the notion of third culture must be seen less as a PLACE than as a symbolic PROCESS of meaning-making that sees beyond the dualities of national languages (L1–L2) and national cultures (C1–C2)’ (2011, p. 255). Additionally, MacDonald (2019) suggests that within Bhabha’s notion of third space there are elements of a critical, transgressive and transformative approach to culture that would still serve the field of intercultural communication well.

Interculturality has been similarly core in critical intercultural communication studies over the last few decades. Interculturality can be characterised in two senses; firstly, more narrowly as referring to a specific discourse based, non-essentialist approach to researching cultural identities (e.g. Zhu, 2019) and, secondly, in the wider sense referring to intercultural communication research and education as a whole but adopting a similar non-essentialist perspective (e.g. Holmes & MacDonald, 2020). Interculturality in the first sense examines how cultural practices and identities are negotiated and constructed in interaction, rather than making a priori assumptions about cultural groupings. Cultural identities are viewed as something we do, rather than static and pre-given, ‘it problematises the notion of cultural identities and emphasises the *emergent, discursive* and *inter* – nature of interactions’ (Zhu, 2019, p. 219). Power and negotiation in intercultural interactions are an important aspect of this perspective, with participants self-orientating or being ascribed cultural identities (Zhu, 2019). This can lead to varying degrees of identity alignment or misalignment in intercultural communication often related to issues of nationality and ethnicity, including racism and othering (Zhu & Li, 2016).

The second perspective to interculturality, while closely related, extends the concept beyond discourse and identity research and typically covers perspectives in both research and education where culture and identity are seen as fluid and changing concepts (e.g. Holmes & MacDonald, 2020; Risager & Dervin, 2014). Again, a critical and questioning approach to cultural categorisation is central, as Risager and Dervin write, ‘[t]he notion of interculturality is thus a difficult one as it still contains the word ‘culture’. But through the use of the suffix ‘-ality’ we are hoping to give the notion a more flexible, unstable and critical meaning’ (2014, p. 10). Power relationships are also of concern with Risager and Dervin (2014) agreeing with critical scholars who emphasise the need for more attention to power, othering and the dominance of ‘White’, ‘Western’ discourse. Similarly, Holmes and MacDonald in an introduction to a SI of this journal on ‘the good interculturalist’ note that many of the papers ‘problematise notions of interculturality emanating from the centre (the global North), and highlight the need for more locally constructed theories, pedagogies, and materials’ (2020, p. 4). Despite these critical and fluid perspectives on culture, which match with the transcultural approach in this paper, there is still an underlying position that retains the trace of methodological nationalism and a pull towards the constant reference to national cultures. Holmes and MacDonald’s choice of quote from the original conference call on which the SI was based illustrates this difficulty ‘Our interest in the notion of the ‘intercultural’ ... rests on the root of the word, ‘inter’, which hints at reciprocity, being located/ occurring/existing between’ (2020, p. 1).

Overall, much contemporary intercultural communication research has moved beyond simplistic national scale language and culture correlations, as Jenks et al. write:

research has matured to a stage where most scholars reject reductionist and essentialist approaches to culture and identity. Intercultural communication researchers are now concerned with using critical approaches to identify and explicate how culture and identity are situated in real-life, real-world encounters. (2013, p. 122)

Indeed, in a recent SI of this journal on critical intercultural communication research Dooly and Rubinstein discuss ‘nebulous space where individuals cross and reshape boundaries’ and



‘transformative practices involving social activities and interaction that push beyond ‘fixed’ and separate systems’ (2018, p. 2). Such perspectives are very much in-line with the transcultural communication approach advocated here. Yet, as Holliday and MacDonald (2020) discuss, there is still a ‘post-positivist’ position underpinning much intercultural communication research in which communicative practices are viewed as between or in contrast to national cultures (see Dooly and Rubinstein’s (2018) references to third place and *transnationalism*). We need to go further and move beyond this post-positivism or methodological nationalism. This is not to deny the role of national scales or other powerful discourses of culture and language. However, such scales should not be assumed a priori and to return to a much-cited quotation from Scollon and Scollon over twenty years ago, we need to ask ‘who has introduced culture as a relevant category, for what purposes and with what consequences?’ (2001, p. 545), therefore maintaining a critical approach to all our cultural categorisations including third place and liminality. As such, we must be open to the presence of multiple spatial–temporal scales *simultaneously* present as transcultural perspectives emphasise, rather than *hybridized* as in intercultural communication research.

### Trans perspectives in applied linguistics

The final strand of thinking which transcultural communication draws on is trans theories in applied linguistics and education. Adopting a similar position to current transculturality perspectives, Hawkins and Mori state that, ‘this move toward a ‘trans-’ disposition signals the need to transcend the named and bounded categories that have historically shaped our thinking about the world and its inhabitants, the nature of knowledge, and communicative resources’ (2018, p. 1). The most well-known application of this trans approach in applied linguistics is translanguaging (e.g. García & Li, 2014; Li, 2018). Given the extensive discussions of translanguaging elsewhere, a full characterisation will not be given here; however, its relevance to critical intercultural communication research has already been noted (e.g. Holliday & Macdonald, 2020) and there are several aspects that are directly relevant to transcultural communication. Firstly, the three strands of the translanguaging approach: transcendent, transformative, and transdisciplinary perspectives on language and meaning making (Li, 2018, p. 27), match well with similar ideas already outlined in transculturality and transcultural communication. Secondly, a key aspect of translanguaging and transcultural communication is viewing communication as making use of more than just linguistic resources (Canagarajah, 2018). Li states that ‘[h]uman communication has always been multimodal; people use textual, aural, linguistic, spatial, and visual resources, or modes, to construct and interpret messages’ (2018, p. 21). Similarly, transcultural communication also emphasises the importance of multimodal resources and transmodal processes (Baker & Sangiamchit, 2019). Both perspectives entail a holistic approach to understanding communication in which all meaning making resources are investigated, with borders between different modes blurred and transcended, and meaning emerging from complex chains of connected multimodal resources in a ‘transmodal moment’ (Newfield, 2017, p. 103). Thirdly, in defining translanguaging as a theory of language Li proposes that ‘Translanguaging Instinct drives humans to go beyond narrowly defined linguistic cues and transcend culturally defined language boundaries to achieve effective communication’ (2018, pp. 24–25), underscoring the importance of moving beyond linguistic *and* cultural borders. Finally, there are obvious parallels between transcultural communication and translanguaging space, ‘a space that is created by and for Translanguaging practices, and a space where language users break down the ideologically laden dichotomies between the macro and the micro, the societal and the individual, and the social and the psychological through interaction’ (Li, 2018, p. 23). In both translanguaging space and the multiple scales simultaneously present in transcultural communication, participants are viewed as transcending linguistic, cultural and other boundaries, instead of hybridising or being positioned in-between. The trans prefix from translanguaging is, thus, closer to the trans of transcultural communication than the inter of intercultural communication.

Trans theories are increasingly being used in empirical research in applied linguistics. For instance, Dovchin et al. (2016, 2018) adopt a transglossic framework involving translanguaging, transmodality and transculturality, to investigate the linguistic and cultural practices of young adults in Bangladesh and Mongolia. The studies illustrate both the creativity and freedom digital spaces, ELF and multilingualism enable, but also the unequal opportunities and affordances available to different participants and the constraints of pre-existing social structures, including monolingual and Anglophone ideologies associated with English. Pitzl (2018) makes use of translanguaging and transcultural communication to explore the common, but under researched, phenomena of short-term intercultural groupings, which she terms Transient International Groups (TIGs), and their use of ELF. The temporary nature of TIGs means that a high degree of negotiation, accommodation and creativity is needed to establish shared translanguaging and transcultural territory with norms and conventions emerging in situ. Pitzl examines how an idiom in Italian ‘fuma come un turco’ is used and understood by Maltese and Serbian L1 speakers in a predominantly ELF interaction, and in particular, how the interaction leading up to that point established the shared territory in which ‘such a complex translanguaging and transcultural remark can be made just like that, more or less in passing, by an ELF speaker and can be successfully interpreted by the ELF speakers addressed’ (2018, p. 39). In Baker and Sangiamchit (2019), we presented a digital ethnography of a group of international students’ interactions on a social networking site. The data highlighted the fluid and complex linguistic and cultural practices in communication in which boundaries between languages, modes and cultures were blurred and difficult to discern. A transcultural, translanguaging and transmodal framework was proposed to account for this complexity and to produce a holistic understanding of the communication.

Turning specifically to language education, a number of recent studies have adopted transcultural approaches. In Baker (2016) I proposed adopting a transcultural perspective to understanding international universities due to the transnational networks that universities are part of, the multilingual and multicultural staff and student bodies, and the superdiverse urban settings of many institutions. Importantly, this means preparing students and staff (international and local), for transcultural communication and translanguaging as a normal part of university teaching and interactions. Other notions include ‘transcultural competence’ (Mori & Sanuth, 2018) related to crossing the boundaries of languages and cultures and eschewing a ‘target’ language and culture focus in language classrooms, and ‘transcultural disposition’ (Lee & Canagarajah, 2019) as part of translanguaging practices where diverse, multiple and, at times, contradictory linguistic and cultural practices are made use of in the emergent process of constructing a voice and identity writing in ‘another’ language.

### Transcultural communication

Having outlined the three core areas that transcultural communication draws upon (transculturality, critical intercultural communication studies, trans theories in applied linguistics), the main principles of a transcultural communication approach and its implications for research and pedagogy can be presented. Firstly, the trans metaphor replaces the inter metaphor to emphasise that in such interactions participants can transgress and transcend linguistic and cultural borders. Of course, in transcending borders we are presupposing their existence but in order to avoid methodological nationalism there should be no a priori assumptions about which categories and boundaries are relevant to interactions. Secondly, through the processes of transgressing and transcending boundaries, those very boundaries themselves are transformed, potentially opening up new social spaces and identities. At the same time, we need to acknowledge that previous structures, limitations and asymmetries may continue to exert an influence and also that new inequalities may emerge. In sum, transcultural communication can be characterised in the following way.

- The study of communicative practices where cultural and linguistic differences are relevant to participants or researchers but not necessarily linked to any particular group (Baker & Ishikawa, 2021, p. 184).
- Cultures are heterogeneous and cultural characterisations are contestable: they are influenced by previous characterisations, limitations and power structures but also open to the emergence of new social spaces, practices and identities.
- Participants move through and across scales rather than in between; multiple scales may be simultaneously present and national cultures are one of many potential scales, ranging from the local to the global, alongside variable temporal scales and speeds from transient interactions and connections to long-term historical processes and influences.
- Cultural practices and references can be constructed in situ and emergent; participants are not necessarily in between any named cultures (Baker & Ishikawa, 2021, p. 184).
- Cultural and linguistic boundaries can thus be transcended, transgressed and transformed.

Some important caveats and explanations should be added here. Firstly, transcultural communication perspectives build on, rather than replace, intercultural communication research and many, although not all, of the aspects of transcultural communication are present in critical intercultural communication research. Secondly, the national scale is not dismissed in transcultural communication research and is a powerful ideology; nonetheless, to avoid methodological nationalism its relevance is not assumed and interactions are not viewed in reference to or in-between national scales. Equally, hybridity and third space or third place are still likely to be important conceptualisations but their inevitable pull towards the national scale should be acknowledged and their relevance needs to emerge from the interaction. Nonetheless, a transcultural perspective is necessary as a further step to account for interactions ‘where participants transcend cultural and linguistic boundaries, rather than mix them, and crucially where the complexity of the interaction means boundaries themselves cannot easily be discerned’ (Baker & Sangiamchit, 2019). From such a perspective, transgressive, critical and fluid perspectives on language, culture and communication form the starting point of the investigation rather than the end point.

In keeping with trans approaches, transcultural communication research should be transdisciplinary and holistic. While from an applied linguistics perspective our point of focus will inevitably be language, this should be a translanguaging approach that goes beyond national language boundaries, with participants full range of linguistic resources recognised and investigated. Furthermore, linguistic analysis needs to be embedded in the wider range of multimodal resources and transmodal processes that typically form transcultural communication practices. Examples of this would include Li’s (2016) study of the multilingual and multimodal resources that form the translanguaging practices of English users in China and Dovchin et al. (2016, 2018) investigation of the linguistic and cultural practices of youth in Bangladesh and Mongolia through a transtextual, translanguaging, transmodal and transcultural framework (discussed earlier). Crucially for the field of language and intercultural communication, the cultural dimension needs to be adequately accounted for and the complex links between linguistic and other cultural practices and references explored. This entails viewing cultural reference, identities and practices as fluid and contestable, operating at multiple scales, as well as being emergent and constructed in situ. For instance, in Baker and Sangiamchit (2019) and Baker and Ishikawa (2021) we explored the complex interplay between linguistic and other multimodal resources through the processes of translanguaging and transmodality in the construction of cultural meanings, references and identities in a manner that was not fixed to either named languages or cultures but rather moved through and across multiple scales in an interaction.

Furthermore, following the general orientation of trans theories it is important that transcultural communication is transdisciplinary in the wider sense. As Abu-Er-Rub et al. explain in relation to transculturality and research, ‘[t]ransculturality forms a transdisciplinary understanding that could underlie any (at least) humanities or social-sciences approach. To uncover even

segments of the rhizome will call for multidisciplinary and often multilingual expertise' (2019, p. xl). The field of intercultural communication research is already well set on this path being interdisciplinary from its outset drawing on applied linguistics, sociology, psychology, education, communication theory, cultural studies, and translation, to name a few. Indeed, recent SIs of this journal illustrate this transdisciplinary focus well including areas such as news media and journalism, translation, the Arts and education, and mobility and work. However, transdisciplinary approaches also need to transcend the established disciplines and include diverse epistemologies. This includes challenging the current dominance of the global North in knowledge production and giving space to post-colonial perspectives (R'boul, 2020; Santos, 2014). For instance, Miike (2019) offers a powerful counter to Eurocentric and Anglocentric research in intercultural communication through an 'Asiacentric metatheory' constructed from Asian traditions and accumulated wisdom, while simultaneously recognising that what might constitute Asianness is debatable and negotiable. The aim, as Miike explains, is to portray the experiences of Asians 'as subjects and actors of their own realities rather than objects and spectators in the lived experiences of others' (2019, p. 164).

The expanded view of communication as outlined in transcultural communication also has important implications for language education. Again, these should not be viewed in opposition to previous approaches, but as a next step in the ongoing process of widening language education beyond its traditional narrow focus on linguistic forms, monolingualism, and national cultures. Learning and using an additional language is an intercultural and transcultural process and needs to be acknowledged as such in pedagogy. However, essentialist national language and culture correlations are still prominent in language teaching, especially ELT, and these are more likely to hinder than help in intercultural and transcultural communication (Baker, 2015). A transcultural language education approach recognises the multilingual, multimodal and multicultural resources and translanguaging, transmodal and transcultural processes that L2 learning and use entails. This includes: a critical approach to language, culture, and identity that challenges dominant discourses of learners 'own' and 'other' cultures and languages and recognises the global role of languages for transcultural communication across and through borders; a focus on processes of communication and adaptable use of communicative resources including awareness of multilingualism and translanguaging; expanding communicative competence to incorporate the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed for intercultural and transcultural L2 communication; replacing the native speaker model with the intercultural speaker and intercultural citizen; providing space for reflection and discussion of intercultural and transcultural experiences; and teaching based on locally relevant contexts and cultures (Baker & Ishikawa, 2021).

Transcultural communication and transcultural language education are new ideas and still a 'work-in-progress' and as such further studies are needed investigating their relevance to language teaching in different settings. It is also important to stress that the pedagogic approaches outlined are necessarily broad suggestions rather than a detailed methodology. There is no single methodology relevant to all settings and the details on how to integrate aspects of a transcultural approach are most appropriately decided in local settings informed by the needs and interests of teachers, students and other stakeholders. Moreover, as previously noted, transcultural approaches build directly on previous critical intercultural communication education perspectives and core aspects are already being investigated. Productive research and debate is taking place around areas such as intercultural communicative competence and awareness (e.g. Baker, 2015; Byram, 2021), intercultural citizenship and language education (e.g. Porto et al., 2018), and critical intercultural language education (e.g. Holmes & MacDonald, 2020; Zhu, 2019). Many of these elements come together in global orientated ELT perspectives that aim to decentre the current Anglophone focus and incorporate multilingual, intercultural and, most recently, transcultural communication perspectives on learning and using English (e.g. Baker & Ishikawa, 2021; Fang & Ren, 2018; Rose & Galloway, 2019).

## Conclusion

Transcultural communication, as offered in this paper, has come about as a response to the need to adequately account for communication in which the links between languages and cultures are complex and fluid with participants making use of multiple spatiotemporal scales simultaneously. Such communication stretches the boundaries of intercultural communication perspectives, since it may not be possible, or even appropriate, to trace the origins of linguistic and cultural practices to any specific ‘named’ culture or language, thus, questioning which cultures participants are ‘in-between’ or ‘inter’. I have argued that the trans metaphor of transcultural communication is better able to represent communicative practices in which cultural and linguistic boundaries are moved through and across and in the process transgressed, transcended and transformed. However, transcultural communication is not a rejection of intercultural communication approaches and, as outlined here, it draws extensively on critical intercultural communication research, trans perspectives in applied linguistics and transculturality theories. Nonetheless, transcultural communication, I believe, opens up new directions in how we think about, research and teach language, culture and communication in a manner that avoids the methodological nationalism that is still deeply embedded in intercultural communication studies. There are, of course, limitations to transcultural communication and there is no suggestion that it will be relevant to all communicative scenarios in which cultural and linguistic differences are significant. It is still a new idea and more theoretical and empirical research needs to be undertaken to establish both its contributions and limitations. Furthermore, it is also important to recognise my own position and blind spots as a researcher. If transcultural communication is to serve as a useful approach it needs to be critically examined by others in a range of settings and from a diversity of perspectives. Through such engagement, it is my hope that transcultural communication provides an important step forward in our thinking about core concepts and approaches in the field of language and intercultural communication studies.

## Notes

1. The irony of this position is not lost on me, being frequently noted when I give talks.
2. I am referring to the linguistic phenomena of ELF i.e., English used between participants who do not share a first language, rather than the research field. However, as noted previously, much of my research has been within this field too. A discussion of ELF and intercultural/transcultural communication is beyond the remit of this paper. Nevertheless, like intercultural communication research, there is a tension between a deeply embedded ‘methodological nationalism’ and more critical perspectives which question unexamined national scale assumptions in communication (see Jenkins (2015) for an overview of different phases of ELF research and Baker and Ishikawa (2021) in relation to ELF and intercultural/transcultural communication).
3. The trans turn as currently conceived is relatively new in applied linguistics; nonetheless, it should be acknowledged that transculturation approaches in TESOL and writing have a longer history dating to the 1990s (Pratt, 1991; Zamel, 1997); albeit one associated more with hybridity than transcultural communication as discussed here.

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