



# XVIII CercleS Conference 2024

Thursday, 12<sup>th</sup> September 2024

Durham University

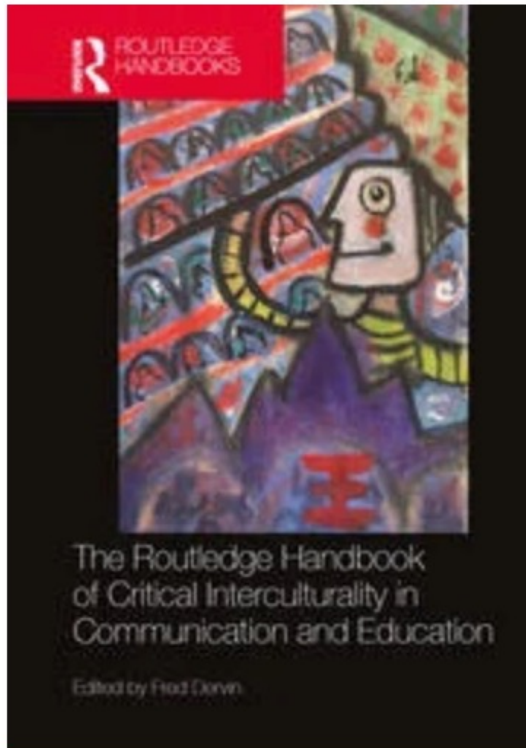
## ***Fostering Critical Interculturality in Foreign Language Education***

**Dr Elinor Parks**

**Durham University**

# Overview

- ***The paper draws on a chapter accepted for publication in the The Routledge Handbook of Critical Interculturality in Communication and Education (currently in production)***



 **Routledge**  
Taylor & Francis Group

1st Edition

## The Routledge Handbook of Critical Interculturality in Communication and Education

Edited By [Fred Dervin](#)

Copyright 2025

Expected publication date: November 20, 2024

COMING SOON

# Overview

## Part 1

- ❖ **Defining Critical Interculturality in the context of Foreign Language Education & German terminology on the ‘intercultural’.**
- ❖ **The relationship between language and culture.**
- ❖ **Summary of my PhD research, addressing the concept of Intercultural Competence and recommendations for further research and practice.**

## Part 2

- ❖ **A brief introduction on my new research project “German as a Glocal Language”.**

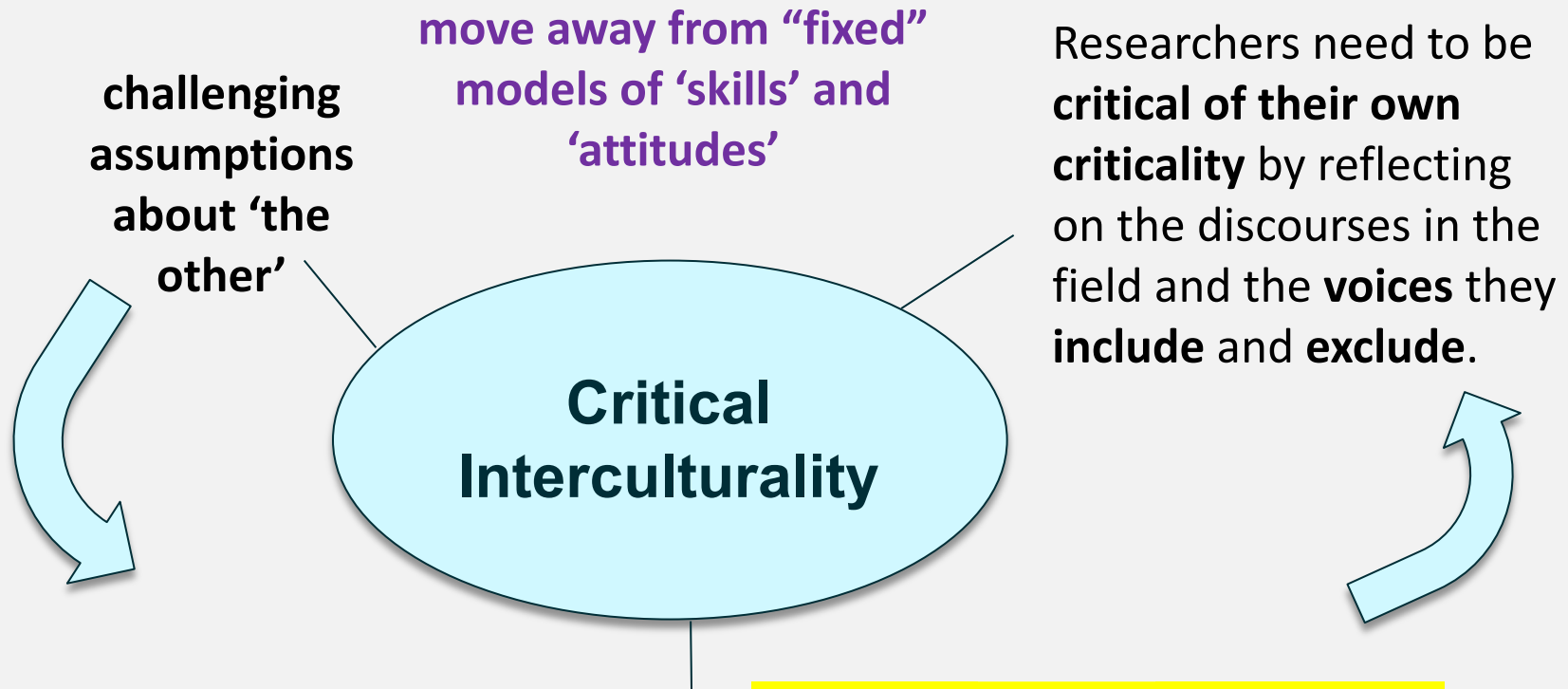
# Introductory questions

1. How would you define critical interculturality in the context of foreign languages in HE and what aspects of the undergraduate curriculum could foster its development?



2. What do you think needs to change in language degree programmes in order to support students' development of interculturality across both the language and content (cultural studies) strands of the curriculum?

# Part 1 - Defining Critical Interculturality



A critical approach comprises a need to **unthink** and **rethink the concept** so that we can **enrich it** as a subject of research and education and **better understand our world through different lenses** (Dervin, 2023, p. 3).

# Critical Interculturality and Foreign Language Education

The 2023 QAA *Subject Benchmark Statement for Languages, Cultures and Societies* (in the UK), for example, maintains that placements abroad “enable **profound engagement with other cultures and societies**, thereby **fostering intercultural awareness and pluricultural capability**” (QAA, 2023, p. 16).

One of the problems with the rhetoric around study abroad is that “discourses are often premised on a **binary culturalist difference** between **students’ home** and **host societies**” (Doerr, 2022, p.1), which **overlooks the students’ own intercultural identities and experiences**.

native language,  
native culture

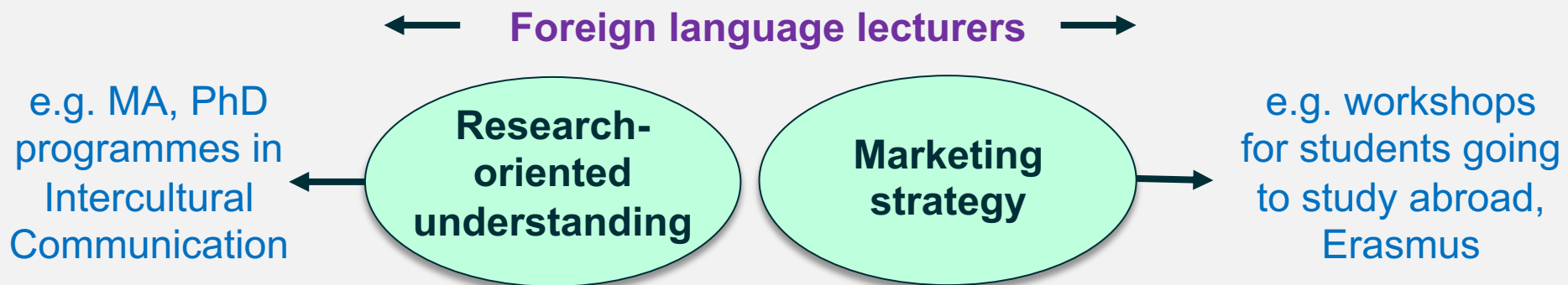


target language,  
target culture

# The different uses of the term “intercultural”

On the one hand we have a **research-oriented understanding of interculturality**, which is **increasingly critical**, while on the other, interculturality is perceived as a desirable **outcome of international mobility** and is thus employed as a **marketing strategy**:

Critical interculturalists working in neo-liberal and globalised Higher Education find themselves in the double bind of **critiquing cultural essentialism** and the commodification of difference (Giroux, 1993) while operating in institutions that use **diversity as a marketing strategy to promote internationalisation**. (Rolfe, 2013 cited in Ferri, 2022, p. 381).





# Critical interculturality – what it is not

The terminology used to talk about interculturality is “infused with unnoticed **ideological** takes, which **have become automatism to us** [...]. We use words and formulations such as (randomly) *culture, tolerance, community, citizenship, open-mindedness*, [...] which are polysemic (they can mean many different things to different people), often illusionary and, at times, empty. (Dervin, 2023, p.10)

One way of describing encounters between people of different cultures is through the notion of **third space** (Bhabha, 1990, 1994); however, this concept has shifted in meaning over the years resulting in an imaginary where individuals feel ‘**caught/stuck in between**’ a ‘**first**’ and ‘**second**’ culture, or, alternatively, it is **imagined as a site of liberation**, where interlocutors are **freed from their cultural roots** (Zhou and Pilcher, 2018). Holliday (2020) highlights the importance of **reclaiming deCentred cultural spaces** from Centre interpretations, which view third space as a “limited intermediate space between bounded large cultures” (Kumaravadivelu, 2008, p.5).



# Critical interculturality – what it is not

A deCentred third space, as originally defined by Homi Bhabha (1994), is understood as:

a **creative space** within which all people at all times can work out intercultural identity **‘without an assumed or imposed hierarchy’**, eluding ‘the politics of polarity’, so that we can **‘emerge as others out of selves’** and avoid the **‘fixity’ of colonial discourse** (Homi Bhabha 1994, p. 5, 56, 94 in Holliday and MacDonald, 2020, p.45).

The notion of interculturality proposed by Fred Dervin similarly **rejects the association** between a **population** with a **single national culture** and views interculturality as extending **‘beyond culture’** taking into account “intersubjectivity in order to put into practice the essential idea that **there is no self without an other and vice-versa**” (Dervin and Risager, 2015, p. 4).

# German terminology on the 'intercultural'



Kreativer DaF Unterricht

## Landeskunde im DaF Unterricht

Landeskunde umfasst folgende Bereiche: 1. Geographie 2. Politik  
3. Geschichte 4. Kultur 5. Kunst 6. Wissenschaft 7. Ökonomie

1. Geography 2. Politics 3. History 4. Culture. 5. Art 6. Science / Scholarship 7. Economics

## What is the problem with the term *Landeskunde* in German?

English translations: regional studies, cultural studies, geography and social studies of a region or country

Literal meaning: Land = country -kunde (suffix) = the study of

# German terminology on the 'intercultural'

Altmeyer (2017) distances himself from using the term *Landeskunde* and prefers the term ***Kulturstudien* (cultural studies) or *kulturbezogenem Lernen* (culture-related learning)**. This is because the term *Landeskunde* implies an understanding of culture, which is **strongly linked to the notion of a nation-state**. Altmeyer (2017) argued that with an increasing globalisation, conventional terms and categories such as **country, nation or cultural identity** have become questionable. Schumann (2019) echoes this view:

**fluidity**

**Die inhaltlichen Gewissheiten der Landeskunde in Form eines eindeutigen Bezuges zu nationalstaatlich definierten Ländern bzw. sprachlich definierbaren Kultur- und Kommunikationsräumen sind unter dem Einfluss der Globalisierung in den vergangenen Jahrzehnten ins Wanken geraten.** (Schumann, 2019, p. 193)

**The content certainties of regional studies in the form of a clear reference to nationally defined countries or linguistically definable cultural and communication areas have faltered (become shaky) under the influence of globalization in recent decades.** (Schumann 2019, p. 193, my translation)

# The relationship between “language” and “culture”

Geertz (1973) viewed culture as “a system of inherited **conceptions expressed in symbolic forms** by means of which men **communicate**, perpetuate and develop their **knowledge** about and **attitudes** towards life” – thus perceiving **language (communication) as an integral element of culture**. Byram (1988), drawing on Geertz’s definition, argued that “such a view (...) clearly reinforces the argument that (...) **language teaching inevitably involves teaching culture**” (p.43). Byram et al. (1994) echo this view more explicitly, stating that ‘language teaching’ is indeed ‘culture teaching’ and the two are inextricably linked.

Since language and culture are inseparable, **we cannot be teachers of language without being teachers of culture** – or vice versa.  
(Byram et al. 1994, p.viii)

What is culture in language teaching?



# The relationship between “language” and “culture”

One interpretation: this understanding of the language-culture relationship reflects a culturalistic perspective, which **prevents both concepts (language and culture) to be understood as fluid**, constantly changing and unbound from any geopolitical borders. Risager (2007, p.180), for instance, argued that “**linguistic flows can go anywhere and link up with any form of context and discursive content**”. While there are different views among scholars on this subject, even those who view the study of culture as an integral component of language learning have distanced themselves from the association between **target language and a single national culture** (Byram, 2008; Kramsch, 1993, 2009).

- **What is the “discursive content” in the Foreign Language classroom?**

# Summary of my doctoral study

**Context: PhD at the University of Hull (completed in 2017)**

**Aim: To explore implications of the separation between language and content on students' development of intercultural competence and criticality**

**Methodology: Mixed-methods design**

- ❖ student questionnaire followed by interviews
- ❖ Staff interviews

**Participants:**

- ❖ 4 universities – 2 in the UK and 2 in the USA.
- ❖ Finalist students of German
- ❖ Staff interviews with HoD / German language coordinators and lecturers

# Theoretical Framework

- The theoretical framework drew primarily on **Byram's (1997) ICC model**, with a focus on ***Savoir s'engager* (Critical Cultural Awareness)** and **Barnett's (1997) conceptualisation of criticality**.
- Barnett's model of *Criticality* was also employed in the criticality project carried out at the University of Southampton (Johnston et al., 2011), as well as in the doctoral work of Yamada (2008) and Romero de Mills (2008).
- These studies explored the development of **criticality in foreign language degree programmes in the UK**.
- It is argued that Barnett's work on criticality, understood in the context of Modern Languages in HE, is relevantly linked to Byram's concept of Critical Cultural Awareness, which draws on critical reflection on **knowledge**, on the **self** and on the **world**.



# Parallels between Critical Cultural Awareness (Byram, 1997) and Criticality (Barnett, 1997)

- ❖ Barnett's work on criticality, understood in the context of Modern Languages in HE, is relevantly linked to Byram's concept of Critical Cultural Awareness.

It includes:

- **critical reflection on knowledge** (e.g. the texts or media studied)
- **on the self** (through reflections on how our own beliefs and values have been shaped)
- **on the world** (through comparisons between one's own language(s) and culture(s) and the language(s) and culture(s) studied).

# Overview of the findings

- Students across **all four institutions** referred to **content modules as the most influential strand** in their development of intercultural competence and criticality.
- Reference was also made to the year abroad, although the **explicit guidance** towards developing a more critical perspective and moving beyond mere observation of difference appeared to play **a more central role** than physical presence in the Target Culture.
- Most students viewed **TL as medium of instruction** in **both language and content** modules **as positive**. Where content was taught in TL, students felt there was greater overlap / integration in their degree.
- While the results suggest that students at all four universities had developed some degree of criticality and IC, only a fraction of the interview participants could be regarded as 'good' interculturalists.

# Recommendations for future research

- Future research is needed to identify ways in which **lower-level language courses** can play a more central role in the development of critical interculturality.
- Other dimensions of critical interculturality, such as a focus on **polysemic terms** or **'untranslatables'**, which refers to **connotations lost in translation** (see Dervin and Jacobsson, 2021) and ways in which **syntax and grammar** are used in the **meaning making** process should also be explored.

# Recommendations for future research

For example, when students of German learn how to ask someone **where they are from**, this could be followed by a discussion on the different connotations of words (e.g. the difference between the usage of the word **'Ausländer'** in the German language, and its English translation 'foreigner'.

- There is also a **need to move away** from an understanding of critical interculturality perceived **primarily in terms of a humanities discipline**, which **undermines the potential of lower-level language courses**.

# Part 2 - German as a Glocal Language

## Outline

- ❖ Defining the concept
- ❖ Aims and research questions
- ❖ Methodology and participants
- ❖ Implications for future research and practice

# German as a Glocal Language – the linguistic dimension

- The notion of Glocal Languages (GL) emphasises that languages have been ‘**contextualized**, **recontextualized** and **entextualised**, in **social, cultural and political sites**, both **at home** and **abroad**, in **different spaces** and **times**’ (Guilherme, 2019, p. 47).

## German as a Glocal Language (the linguistic dimension)

### contextualized

linguistic references (words) linked to historical/political developments, literature, philosophy, psychology  
e.g. Führer, Lager, Angst, Ausländer, Vaterland

### recontextualised

words have acquired new meanings e.g. Landeskunde, Fräulein  
New words: Student:innen, Arbeitskraft, Führungskraft  
Pronomen: they (EN)

### entextualised

words that are no longer associated with a specific cultural reference  
e.g. Gottesdienst (previously assumed to mean “church service” - now also used for Muslim Friday prayers)

# German as a Glocal Language – the social semiotic dimension

[...] languages have been ‘**territorialised**’, ‘**reterritorialised**’ and ‘**deterritorialised**’, both at **home** and **abroad**, in play with different **social, political and cultural events**’ (Guilherme, 2019, p. 47).

## German as a Glocal Language (the social semiotic dimension)

### territorialised

German as “the language of Germany or Austria”

Identification with nation state – the language is inseparable from the target language (TL) community

ALSO

The language of “Goethe” or “Schiller” – association of the German language with literature – high culture

### reterritorialised

GLOBAL – LOCAL – GLOCAL  
German-speaking immigrants in the USA

German in Namibia  
emigration – immigration  
Turkish-Germans in Germany and Turkey

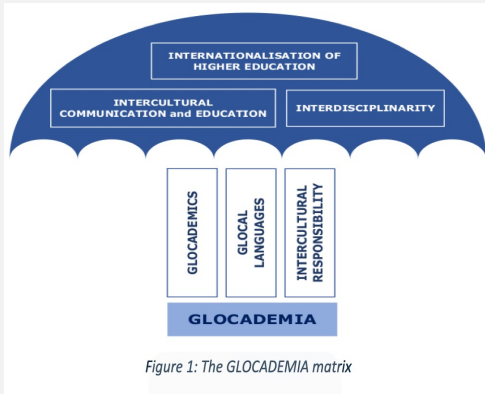
### deterritorialised

German as a language for work – science and engineering

German as a common language among refugees in Germany who don’t share a language (e.g. from Syria, Afghanistan and the Ukraine)



# Positioning GL within the Glocademia Matrix



The **GLOCADEMIA theoretical framework** includes three interdisciplinary, theoretical and practical bodies of knowledge:

## 1. Internationalization of higher education

(academic mobility, internationalization of academic institutions)

## 2. Intercultural communication and education

(individual reflexivity and mindfulness and/or collective awareness of cultural diversity, intercultural dialogue, and intercultural citizenship)

## 3. Interdisciplinarity

(has become of interest to experts in different disciplines as well as policy makers both for cross-disciplinary fieldwork and those operating within the same discipline)

(Guilherme, 2022, p.11)

# Research questions

**RQ1: How do students in the MBA course and German Stage 1 describe their own expectations of what it means to learn a foreign language in HE and their understanding of the concept of German as a Glocal Language (at Time Point 1) ? (TP1 questionnaire and interviews)**

**RQ2: According to students, in what ways does the intervention provide opportunities to critically reflect on the ways in which language continues to be contextualized, recontextualized and entextualised, in social, cultural and political sites, both at home and abroad, in different spaces and times (at Time Point 2)? (TP2 questionnaire, interviews)**

**RQ3: How do students understand the concept of Glocal Languages and German as a Glocal Language (at Time Point 2) and are there differences between the responses of participants in the MBA course and German stage 1? (TP2 questionnaire, interviews)**

# Methodology – Mixed-methods



- ❖ **Rationale:** The study will adopt an exploratory research design comprising an anonymous questionnaire and interviews at two time points (before and after the intervention).
- ❖ **Research orientation:** exploratory – inductive, generation of theory (Bryman, 2008)
- ❖ **Justification for a mixed-methods design** – The questionnaire would allow participants to remain anonymous - potentially leading to greater truthfulness of responses and thus increase the validity of the data (Dörnyei, 2007).
- ❖ The main purpose of the interviews is not only to collect feedback on the intervention itself, but, most importantly, to give students a voice in the way the concepts of “**Glocal Languages**” and “**German as a glocal language**” are **understood** - leading ultimately towards **a collaborative approach towards theorizing these concepts.**

# Research design – Questionnaire and interviews

❖ **Data collection** – questionnaire and interviews at two time points: start of term 1 (October 2024), end of term 1 (December 2024)

❖ **Time point 1** – Questionnaire topics:  
Interview topics:

RQ1

❖ **Time point 2** – Questionnaire topics:  
Interview topics:

RQ2 + RQ3

# Research design – The intervention

- The intervention would include **examples of language use** that reflect the **diverse ways** in which language is employed both **‘at home’** and **‘abroad’** as well as examples of how the German language has been **transformed** and **‘reimagined’** throughout history, in an effort to increase opportunities for a **critical discussion on language and its speakers**.
- ❖ **The linguistic dimension** – focus on words, their origin, use in the past and present
- ❖ **The social semiotic dimension** – focus on meaning-making through short texts, film, social media, poetry, literature

# Participants, data collection and analysis

I will be teaching both German Stage 1 and the German MBA course in the 2024-25 academic year.

- **German Stage 1** – There are around 30-40 students who enroll on this module yearly. All students will be invited to participate in the questionnaire and 10 students will be selected for the interviews (from those who expressed interest to participate).
- **German MBA class** – There are around 20-30 students who enroll on this course yearly. The same approach will be adopted.
- **Data analysis**: Statistical analysis of the questionnaires + thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) of the interviews.

# How results will impact future research and practice

- To my knowledge, this will be the **first empirical study implementing an intervention in German beginners' courses** with an **explicit focus** in promoting both a theoretical and applied **understanding of the concept of German as a Glocal Language**.
- Future research will be able to draw on the findings of this study to explore further opportunities on how to reshape the curricula of beginners' (and higher level) language courses in HE and beyond.
- The findings will be of interest both to Germanists and to teachers of other languages.
- It is hoped that the findings will help promote a more critical approach towards the teaching of languages that reflects the theoretical positions articulated in the Glocademia Matrix.



# Chapter in an edited book – German as GL

**SPRINGER NATURE**

Anticipated date of completion: May 2025



**Book Series: Plurilingual and Intercultural Epistemologies:  
Critical Research, Education and Civic Action**

**Book Title: Glocademia in Practice**

**Editors: Manuela Wagner and Manuela Guilherme  
Preface: Mike Byram**

**PART III: GLOCAL LANGUAGES**

**Chapter 6. Elinor Parks**

***Towards a representation of German as a “Glocal Language” – Redesigning the curriculum of two beginners’ language courses at Durham University, UK***

**Parks, E. (forthcoming in 2025).** *Towards a representation of German as a “Glocal Language” – Redesigning the curriculum of two beginners’ language courses at Durham University, UK*

**Parks, E. (forthcoming in 2024).** Fostering Critical Interculturality in Foreign Language Education, in F. Dervin (forthcoming), *The Routledge Handbook of Critical Interculturality in Communication and Education*.

**Parks, E. (2023).** COVID-19 and Interculturality: revisiting assumptions about intercultural competence and criticality development in Modern Language degree programmes. *Language and Intercultural Communication*, 23(1), 88–104.

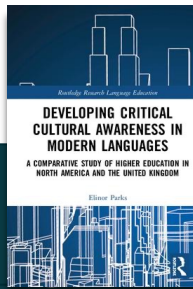
**Parks, E. (2020).** *Developing Critical Cultural Awareness in Modern Languages - A Comparative Study of Higher Education in North America and the United Kingdom*. New York, NY: Routledge.

**Parks, E. (2019).** The separation between language and content in Modern Language degrees: implications for students’ development of critical cultural awareness and criticality, *Language and Intercultural Communication*,

**Parks, E. (2018).** Communicative criticality and savoir se reconnaître: emerging new competencies of criticality and intercultural communicative competence, *Language and Intercultural Communication*, 18:1, 107-124.

2020

**Dr Elinor Parks**  
[elinor.parks@durham.ac.uk](mailto:elinor.parks@durham.ac.uk)



# References

- Altmayer, C. (2017). *Landeskunde im Globalisierungskontext: Wozu noch Kultur im DaF-Unterricht?* In P. Haase & M. Höller (Eds.), *Kulturelles Lernen im DaF/DaZ-Unterricht. Paradigmenwechsel in der Landeskunde* (pp. 3–22). Universitätsverlag.
- Barnett, R. (1997) *Higher education: a critical business*. Buckingham: SRHE and Open University Press.
- Bhabha, H. (1990). *The third space: Interviews with Homi Bhabha*. In J. Rutherford (Ed.), *Identity: Community, culture, difference*. Lawrence and Wishart.
- Bhabha, H. (1994). *The location of culture*. Routledge.
- Byram, M. (1997) *Teaching and assessing intercultural Communicative Competence*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Byram, M. (2008) *From Foreign Language Education to Education for Intercultural Citizenship: Essays and reflections*. Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters.
- Dervin, F. (2016) *Interculturality in Education: A theoretical and methodological toolbox*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Dervin, F. (2021) *Teaching about Interculturality*. In *Teacher Education for for Critical and Reflexive Interculturality* (Ed.), London: Palgrave Macmillan (41-46).
- Dervin, F. (2023). *The paradoxes of interculturality. A toolbox of out-of-the-box ideas for intercultural communication education*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003371052>
- Dervin, F., Chen, N., Yuan, M., Sude, NA., & Jacobsson, A. (2020). COVID-19 and Interculturality: First lessons for Teacher educators. *Education and Society*, 38(1), 89-106. <https://doi.org/10.7459/es/38.1.06>
- Dervin, F., & Jacobsson, A. (2021). *Teacher education for critical and reflexive interculturality*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Dervin, F., & Risager, K. (2015). *Researching identity and interculturality*. Routledge.
- Doerr, N. M. (2022). *Structural competence beyond global competence: Overcoming the culturalist difference framework in study abroad*. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*, 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03057925.2022.2110839>
- Dörnyei, Z. (2007). *Research methods in applied linguistics: Quantitative, qualitative and mixed methodologies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Ferri, G. (2022). *The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house: Decolonising intercultural communication*. *Language and Intercultural Communication*, 22(3), 381–390. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14708477.2022.2046019>

# References

- Giroux, H. (1993). *Consuming social change: The 'united colours of Benetton'*. *Cultural Critique*, 26(26), 5–32.  
<https://doi.org/10.2307/135445>
- Guilherme, M. (2019) Glocal languages beyond postcolonialism: The metaphorical North and the South in the geographical north and south. In M. Guilherme & L. M. T. M. Souza (eds.) *Glocal Languages and Critical Intercultural Awareness: The South answers back* (pp. 42-64). London and New York: Routledge.
- Guilherme, M. (2022) Glocademia: Intercultural responsibility across North/South epistemologies. In M. Guilherme (ed.) *A Framework for Critical Transnational Research: Advancing Plurilingual, Intercultural, and Inter-epistemic Collaboration in the Academy*. London and New York: Routledge
- Holliday, A. & McDonald, M. (2020). Researching the Intercultural: Intersubjectivity and the Problem with Postpositivism, *Applied Linguistics*, 41(5), 621-639. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/applin/amz006>
- Kumaravadivelu, B. (2008). *Cultural globalization and language education*. Yale University Press.
- Klapper, J. (2006) *Understanding and developing good practice – Language Teaching in Higher Education*. CILT: London
- Kramsch, C. (1993) *Context and Culture in Language Teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Kramsch, C. (2009) *The multilingual subject: What language learners say about their experience and why it matters*. Oxford: Oxford Press.
- Quality Assurance Agency. (2023). *Subject benchmark statement: Languages, cultures and societies*. <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/the-quality-code/subject-benchmark-statements/subject-benchmark-statementlanguages-cultures-and-societies>
- Romero de Mills, P. (2008). *The development of criticality amongst undergraduate students of Spanish (Unpublished doctoral thesis)*. University of Southampton.
- Schumann, A. (2019). *Interkulturelle Kommunikation*. In C. Fäcke & F.-J. Meißner (Eds.), *Handbuch Mehrsprachigkeits- und Mehrkulturalitätsdidaktik* (pp. 184–188). Narr.
- Simpson, A. & Dervin, F. (2019). Forms of dialogism in the Council of Europe Reference Framework on Competences for Democratic Culture, *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 41(4),305-319.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2019.1618317>
- Yamada, E. (2008). *Fostering criticality in a beginners' Japanese language course: A case study in a UK higher education modern languages degree programme (Doctoral thesis)*. Durham University. <http://etheses.dur.ac.uk/2160/>.
- Zhou, X. V., & Pilcher, N. (2018). Revisiting the 'third space' in language and intercultural studies. *Language and Intercultural Communication*, 19(1), 1–8. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14708477.2018.1553363>