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Intercultural Competence in a Face-to-Face Tandem Language Learning: a Micro-Analytic Perspective

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This article is an investigation into the characteristics of intercultural competence in a face-to-face tandem language learning context between English and Chinese postgraduate students. It examines idiomatic meaning exchanges through the adoption of a conversation analytical perspective. It is a contribution to the existing body of knowledge on intercultural competence and on tandem language learning. However, unlike previous research in this field (e.g. Bennett, 1986; Byram, 1997; Bennett, 1998; Hofstede, 2001; Brammerts, 2003; Lewis, 2003; Stickler and Lewis, 2003), this research uses a micro-analytical account of 'repair', 'turn taking practices', and 'preference organisation' in order to unravel the cultural differences between the participants and the ways in which they orient to them in a face-to-face tandem language learning context.

Key words: intercultural competence, intercultural communication, intercultural learning, face-to-face tandem language learning, identity, conversation analysis

هذا المقال يبحث عن مميزات التعامل مع الثقافات الأخرى في حالة الترادف اللغوي وجها لوجه بين طلاب إنجليز وصينيين. المقال يدرس هذا الموضوع عن طريق تبادل الأمثلة بطريقة تحليل محادثات بين الطلاب. هذا المقال هو إسهام للمعرفة الحالية عن التعامل مع الثقافات الأخرى وعن الترادف اللغوي بين طلاب من ثقافات مختلفة. ولكن، ليس مثل أبحاث سابقة في هذا المجال، هذا البحث يستعمل التحليل الجزئي للكلام عندما يتم اثناء الحديث، مثلا عند الإصلاح، أخذ دور او تفضيل، لأجل فهم كيفية اختلاف الثقافات بين المشاركين وكيف يتم التوجه اليهم في حالة الترادف اللغوي بين ثقافات مختلفة.

Introduction

Intercultural competence as a concept has been highly debated. For instance, Bennett (1986, 1998) calls it 'intercultural communication sensitivity' and divides the concept into several stages. He argues that within one of the later stages (the adoption), the interactant displays intercultural communication sensitivity through 'empathy'. Whilst Byram (1997) names it 'intercultural communicative competence', he divides the

concept into five savoirs. The five savoirs relate to our curiosity towards other cultures, our explanations when facing misunderstandings, our interpretations of documents from different cultures, our ability to critically evaluate our own practices and those from different cultures, and the ways in which we obtain new knowledge from a different culture and our ability to use it.

On the other hand, Hofstede (2001) calls his model 'cross cultural communication' and he divides it into different dimensions (power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism versus collectivism, masculinity versus femininity, and long-term versus short-term orientation). These dimensions are based on a study in which he collected data from 50 countries, and they are supposed to help us understand the differences between different countries. These dimensions, according to Hofstede (2001), were set so they can enable us to communicate better on an intercultural level.

Different studies (e.g. Gudykunst and Nishida, 1994; Straffon, 2003; Helm, 2009; Pusch, 2009; Houghton, 2010), when investigating the concept of intercultural communication / intercultural communicative competence, have used either Bennett's, Byram's, or Hofstede's model to interpret their data. In these studies, they have tried to fit the 'description' of IC/ICC models into the data, which might indicate that they were adopting an 'etic approach' (Pike, 1967). According to Pike (1967) 'an etic organization of a world-wide-cross-cultural scheme may be created by the analyst' (p.38). For instance, Helm (2009), when analysing her data, attempted to look for words that are used in Byram's (1997) model in order to show whether the participants are interculturally component. In such studies (e.g. Gudykunst and Nishida, 1994; Straffon, 2003; Helm, 2009; Pusch, 2009; Houghton, 2010), the authors try to impose cultural differences on the participants rather than letting that data speak for itself.

Face-to-face tandem language learning is the context of this study. Tandem language learning can be done either face-to-face or through asynchronous tandem exchanges. It is argued (Brammerts, 2003; Stickler and Lewis, 2003; Woodin, 2003) that within tandem learning exchanges, learners have the opportunity to improve their communication skills within the studied language through authentic communication and promote their intercultural competence abilities. However, despite these claims, in this research the researcher adopts an 'emic approach' (Pike, 1967) to analyse the data by using Conversation Analysis (CA). Pike (1967) explains that 'the emic structure of a particular system must….be discovered' (p.38) rather than predefined prior to the data collection.

Several studies (Nishizaka, 1995; Mori, 2003; Hosoda, 2006; Park, 2007; Brandt & Jenks, 2011; Kitzinger & Mandelbaum, 2013; Bolden, 2014; Shrikant, 2018; Arano, 2019) adopt an 'emic approach', and use methodologies such as ethnomethodology (Garfinkel, 1967), CA (Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson, 1974), and Membership Categorization Analysis (MCA) (Sacks, 1972) to examine the concept of 'interculturality'. Nishizaka (1995) explains that several studies which examine 'interculturality' attribute 'interculturality' to the participants prior to examining the data. In her study, Nishizaka (1995) examines radio program interviews with foreign students in Japan. In her findings, she shows how the interviewer and the interviewees keep on coordinating their conduct throughout the interaction in order to be Japanese and a foreigner relevantly. Mori's (2003) study adopts Nishizaka's approach to studying 'interculturality'. Mori (2003) examines interactions between Japanese and American students and argues that previous research on ICC took 'interculturality' for granted whereas she, on the other hand, investigates when 'interculturality' becomes relevant during the interaction. What she shows through her data is that the participants' cultural

backgrounds were 'reflected in their selection of a particular subset of category-activity questions' (p.179).

Similarly, Park's (2007, p. 340) aim was 'to establish an empirical basis for the notions of NS/NNS as members' categories instead of *priori* labels externally imposed on the participants. Park (2007) uses CA to examine his data, and argues that Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1974) were the first to argue that identity is constructed and examined through the turn-taking system. Park (2007) examines the NS/NNS identities through moment-by-moment analysis of their developing talk, and he investigated the moments of when the NS/NNS identities are made relevant. Park (2007) concludes, through his findings, that asymmetry in interactions between NS/NNS is not inherent, but it is locally occasioned and can be negotiable.

Brandt and Jenks (2011, p. 42) also argue that 'interculturality' 'cannot be predefined, but it is constituted in and through the interaction itself'. They contend that this approach of investigating 'interculturality' fits with the principles of CA and MCA which establish that identities and cultures are changeable. They use CA to investigate voice-based chat rooms in order to examine how food-eating practices are deployed and co-constructed by the interactants, and their findings show that questions and assumptions about cultural practices can be negated, rejected, or accepted in interactions. Similarly, Bolden's (2014) aim was to investigate what makes an interaction 'intercultural'. Her study looks at 'moments in interaction' when the interactants (Russian-American immigrant families) orient to differences in cultural knowledge. Bolden (2014) adopts an emic approach and uses CA to analyse her data. What she concludes is that what makes an interaction 'intercultural' is the 'different ways in which linguistic and cultural differences among participants are exposed in action' (p. 233).

To conclude, various scholars such as Bennett (1986), Byram (1997), Bennett (1998) and Hofstede (2001) have tried to pre-determine what intercultural competence means by fitting people from different cultures into boxes. These models are considered problematic as, instead of trying to determine intercultural competence of people by the outcome of the interaction (emic approach), they determine the competence prior to the interaction (etic approach) by labelling people from different cultural backgrounds. These models treat a person as a separate objective entity and see an individual as having a clear and independent culture and value set which are part of the group this individual belongs to. However, the reality is that every individual is different and not all individuals from a certain cultural background would behave in a similar way. What this study offers is a different method to studying the concept of intercultural competence by using a micro-analytic perspective (emic approach) to examine the data. Various studies (e.g. Nishizaka, 1995; Mori, 2003; Hosoda, 2006; Park, 2007; Brandt & Jenks, 2011; Kitzinger & Mandelbaum, 2013; Bolden, 2014; Shrikant, 2018; Arano, 2019) use an 'emic approach' to examine the concept of 'interculturality' through the study of identity construction. However, there are not many studies that use this approach to study interactions in a face-to-face tandem language learning context. Therefore, the aim of this study is to use conversation analysis (emic approach) in order to investigate the characteristics of intercultural competence in a face-to-face tandem language learning between Chinese and English students.

Materials and Methods

The data that was examined here is taken from face-to-face tandem learning sessions between postgraduate English and Chinese students studying in a UK university. Four pairs of students took part in these tandem learning sessions. Each pair was video recorded during their 6 sessions of tandem language learning together and CA was used

as the main method for analysis. All participants are PG students studying in the same UK university. The participants were provided with a syllabus that the researcher had prepared, the topic of which was idiomatic language. The material and the ideas for both the English and the Chinese syllabus were adapted from two books by Lewis and Walker (2003) and Greenwood (2007).

As mentioned above, this research uses CA as its theoretical framework for analysing the data. According to Heritage and Atkinson (1984, p. 1) 'the central goal of conversation analytic research is the description and explication of the competences that ordinary speakers use and rely on in participating in intelligible, socially organised interaction'. Thus, the aim of CA is to study the order and organisation of social action in interaction (Seedhouse, 2004). This order is produced by the participants and oriented to by them.

There are various reasons why CA uses recording technologies to collect data over observers' notes, subjects' reports, or unaided intuitions. There are various limitations of recollection in generating data with comparison to the richness of empirically occurring interaction. Therefore, CA's way of examining transcripts is not a product of recollection or intuitive invention (Heritage and Atkinson, 1984) but rather 'the purpose of a CA transcription is to make *what* was said and *how* it was said available for analytic consideration, at first for the analyst who does the transcribing, and later for others, colleagues, and audiences' (Ten Have, 2007, p. 32) and that is how CA collects its evidence. Thus a CA analyst uses the transcriptions to highlight phenomena and then would use that evidence from the transcriptions to share with an audience, and by sharing it, the audience would get an independent access to the data being analysed (Ten Have, 2007).

The availability of the recorded data allows for the data to be repeated and heard as many times as possible and would allow for a detailed examination of specific events in interaction, enhancing the process of observation (Heritage and Atkinson, 1984).

Results: Asymmetrical Orientation to Knowledge

The theme that has emerged from these 8 excerpts is 'asymmetrical orientation to knowledge'. Asymmetries of knowledge is important in a tandem learning context as for half of the session, the tandem partners play the role of teacher and, in the other half, the role of a learner. In some of these excerpts (1, 2, 3, 4, and 6), the English students (En1, En2, En3, and En4) explain to the Chinese students (Ch1, Ch2, Ch3, and Ch4) the meaning of English idioms, and in other excerpts (5, 7, and 8), the English students ask the Chinese students of a Chinese idiom that is equivalent to the English one.

Excerpt 1 is taken from the English teaching part of the session and En1 is teaching Ch1 some English idioms. He starts by saying that the next idiom 'is a good one' (line 1) and then he continues by checking whether Ch1 has heard of it before. Ch1 in turn plays the role of the learner all throughout the excerpt.

Excerpt 1

```
1     En1:        ➔ne- next one is a good one
2                 (0.2)
3     Ch1:        ➔↑uh ↓huh
4                 (0.3)
5     En1:        erm:: (0.5) <↑don't ↓look ↑at ↓gift horse
6                 (0.2) in the ↓mouth>
7     Ch1:        ➔.hhh hehe
8                 (0.9)
```

```
9    En1:      you're heard this one be↑fore or not?=
10   Ch1:      =n↑o:: [never heard      ] of ↑that
11   En1:  ➔     i[t's is a good one]
12             (0.3)
13   En1:  ➔yeah >ish ↑use ish use< (0.1) ish useful
14             (0.3) yeah (0.3) ↑I ↓WOULD ↑USE ↓IT erm:
15             .hhh (0.8) SO (1.0) ↑YOU ↓DON'T ↑LOOK (0.1)
16             so you don't look at ↑something .hhh
```

En1 claims epistemic rights (Heritage and Raymond, 2005) by accessing his domain of knowledge, which in this case is the English idiom. In this excerpt, En1 uses a few pre-expansions (they are called pre-expansions because they could be produced before an invitation, a request, or an offer (Schegloff, 2007)). Pre-expansions affect the ways in which the talk will unfold (Liddicoat, 2011) and they can lead to agreements on who has access to what (Stivers, Mondada and Steensig, 2011). The first example of a pre-expansion in this excerpt is in line 1, where En1 tries to assess the idiom that he is going to discuss by saying 'next one is a good one'. This is followed by a pause, which is followed in line 3 by a 'go-ahead' ('uh huh') response by Ch1. In line 5, En1 tells Ch1 the idiom he is going to discuss, and this is followed in line 7 with an in-breath and a smile by Ch1 which could indicate another 'go-ahead' response. En1 produces another pre-expansion in line 9 by asking 'you're heard this one before or not?'. By doing so, he assumes expertise in the area in formulating that line as a question, treating Ch1 as someone who might not be familiar with this idiom (Kitzinger and Mandelbaum, 2013) and thus does not share with him the same cultural background. In line 10, this is immediately followed with a 'no' by Ch1 and by doing so, she ascribes to herself the identity of a novice. From lines 13-14, En1 produces another pre-expansion by again

assessing the idiom by saying 'ish useful I would use it', which is followed by En1 saying the actual idiom out loud. The aim of pre-expansions is to assess whether there will be an encouragement or discouragement toward the following turn (Schegloff, 2007). This was determined when Ch1 did 'same evaluation' (Liddicoat, 2011: p. 153) by acknowledging in line 3 ('uh huh') what En1 is saying and then saying in line 10 'no never heard of that'.

In this excerpt, there is an alignment between the two participants as while the English student is talking, the Chinese student, in turn, uses vocal continuers to treat his turn as still in progress (Stivers, 2008). 'Intercultural moments' (Bolden, 2014, p. 210) are manifested through En1's and Ch1's asymmetry in their expertise and their agreement as to whom is the expert and whom is the novice in this discursive practice. This allows a learning opportunity as both participants have an agreement regarding whom is the 'expert' in the field of 'English idioms' (Hosoda, 2006). Therefore, in this discursive practice, the two participants mutually co-construct the knowledge they possess (Young, 2008) as they play the role of the teacher/learner.

In excerpt 2, En1 continues elaborating on the idiom 'don't look a gift horse in the mouth' while playing the role of the teacher and Ch1, in turn, plays her role as a learner accordingly.

Excerpt 2

```
1    En1:      (0.7) ah gift horse (0.9) erm::: (0.6) a
2              (0.1) gift (0.1) and a horse (0.2)
3    Ch1:      .hh heheh
4    En1:      (0.3) in the mouth and it (0.1) basically
5              just ↑mea:ns (0.4) don't (0.1) be
6              <ongrate↑ful> (0.7)
```

```
7    Ch1:       ➜mhm

8    En1:       (0.2) for <receiving a pre↑sent>

9               ➜(0.3)

10   Ch1:       ➜↑uh:::

11              ➜(0.2)

12   En1:       so:: (0.1) it ↑say::: (1.3) someone bought

13              you a birthday present (0.1)

14   Ch1:       ➜↑uh ↓huh
```

En1 starts by saying the actual idiom 'ah gift horse (0.9) erm::: (0.6) a (0.1) gift (0.1) and a horse (0.2)', and even though there are a few pauses within En1's turn from line 1-2, Ch1 does not produce a turn (Hutchby and Wooffitt, 1998; Seedhouse, 2004). In lines 4-6, 8, and 12-13, En1 continues to explain the idiom, and thus exercises his expert identity (Bolden, 2014) as he continues to access his domain of knowledge (the English language). Ch1, on the other hand, produces acknowledgment tokens (Clayman, 2013) such as 'mhm' (line 7), 'uh' (line 10), and 'uh huh' (line 14) to treat En1's turns as still in progress (Stivers, 2008). By Ch1 producing acknowledgment tokens, she is aligning herself with the invoked novice identity (Park, 2007). The acknowledgement and understanding between Ch1 and En1 indicates that there is an alignment between the two (Stivers, 2008).

In this excerpt, En1 is still demonstrating that he has the main access to the epistemic authority in that context. Since English language is his first language, he therefore demonstrates that he owns it and he is acting as the one who is knowledgeable in that matter. The emphasis in this excerpt is on the process of 'learning/teaching', this means having the knowledge and awareness to know when to access and cede epistemic authority (Sahlström, 2011). There is an alignment and asymmetrical orientation to

knowledge between Ch1 and En1. The turns are facilitated by both participants as they match the formal design preference of the turns (Stivers, Mondada and Steensig, 2011). For instance, Ch1 (as the learner) produces acknowledgement tokens in lines 7, 10, and 14 to acknowledge the fact that En1's turns (as the teacher) are still in progress as he is still explaining the meaning of the idiom, and En1, on the other hand, continues accessing his domain of knowledge by continuing to produce turns.

Excerpt 3 is an exchange between En2 and Ch2. Prior to this excerpt, En2 explained to Ch2 what the idiom 'sweep her off her feet' means and, in excerpt 3, she provides Ch2 with an example by incorporating a drawing to help him understand the idiom. In response, Ch2 produces acknowledgment tokens.

Excerpt 3

```
1    En2:        that uhm:: °you know the the girl° (0.4)

2    Ch2:     ➔[°↑uhu ↓huh°]

3    En2:        [((drawing))] [°here's the girl°]

4                             [((drawing))      ]((0.5

5                seconds during which En2 is drawing))

6    En2:     ➔standing here ·hhh and the GUY comes in

7                ((0.7 seconds during which En2 is drawing))

8                [and like   ] ((1.2 seconds of which En2 is

9                [((drawing))] he's all amazing and ((0.2

10               seconds of which En2 is drawing)) strong ( )

11               great and HE RUNS IN=

12   Ch2:     ➔=<°↑uhu ↓huh ↑uhu ↓huh ↑h[uh°>]

13   En2:     ➔                          [w   ]o:: and

14               then like ((0.2 seconds of which En2 is
```

```
15          drawing)) sweeps her up into his arm so he's

16          holding her °like this° ((1.3 seconds of

17          which En2 is drawing)) °and she's° °there°

18          ((0.5 seconds of which En2 is drawing)) ( )

19          °there in his arms°
```

In line 1, En2 produces a turn and within her turn she elaborates on the idiom 'sweep her off her feet' by saying 'you know the the girl'. Subsequently, in line 2, Ch2 produces an acknowledgement token which overlaps with En2's drawing which starts in line 3. It is important to mention that the acknowledgment token that is produced by Ch2 in line 2 indicates an aligning activity (Stivers, 2013) as he is acknowledging that, although En2 is drawing, her turn is still in progress as she is trying to incorporate drawing in order to explain the idiom 'sweep her off her feet' to Ch2. From line 3 to 11, En2 proceeds with her turns while incorporating drawing. Within her turns, she stresses two words: 'amazing' and 'runs in'. En2 stresses the words 'amazing' and 'runs in' which invoke 'a connection, a pairing, with something else' (Schegloff, 1998: p. 249) which in this case is the drawing. In line 12, Ch2 once more produces acknowledgment tokens ('uhu', 'huh', 'uhu', 'huh'), which are again followed by En2's production of another long turn from line 13 to 19 accompanied by a drawing. As En2 expands on the English idiom 'sweep her off her feet', she exercises her expert identity (Park, 2007) and by Ch2 producing acknowledgment tokens all throughout the excerpt, he is treating En2 as the expert in the field and himself as the novice.

Through the identities of an expert/novice and teacher/learner, the two participants 'align themselves asymmetrically in relation to each other' (Park, 2007, p. 345), and thus allow a learning opportunity to arise (Hosoda, 2006). En2 exercises her expert identity (Park, 2007) by fully expanding on the matter (the English idiom 'sweep

her off her feet'). Therefore, the identity of Ch2 was invoked and developed in relation to En2's identity as, through the asymmetry in knowledge between them, Ch2 attributed to En2 the identity of an expert and En2 attributed to Ch2 the identity of a novice (Hosoda, 2006; Park, 2007; Bolden, 2014).

In excerpt 4, En4 is trying to explain the idiom 'to have a chip on one's shoulder', and he tries to provide Ch4 with some examples that illustrate the idiom.

Excerpt 4

```
1                  (0.2)

2    En4:         er:m(0.9) so the general idea is that there

3                 is some↑thing (1.7) er::m (0.8) ((0.2 of

4                 which En4 does tongue clicking)) (0.4) <it's

5                 like something that ↑you> (0.9)>over ly:::<

6                 (0.6) >bitter at the ↑world< (0.2) ↑about

7                 (0.3) I think ➔ (1.1)

8    En4:         ➔so::::: erm::::: (0.2)a eh:: (0.8)okay

9                 another Example might be::: a someone from

10                a very poor family say (0.9) it's quite

11                often used in that (0.3) ↓case

12                ➔(0.5)

13   En4:         ➔cause (0.4) if someone (0.1) is from a

14                very poor family and then (1.2) when they're

15                socializing with people who are richer (0.7)

16   Ch4:         ➔°↑uh ↓huh°=

17   En4:         =will like make make it awk↑ward make an

18                issue out Of the fact that like (0.6)

19                they're [↑ri
```

```
20    Ch4:                    ➔ [°but°]
```

In line 1 of this excerpt, there is a pause of 0.2 seconds which is followed by En4's turn production from line 2 to 7 as he tries to explain the idiom in detail. Although in En4's turn from line 2-7 he pauses a great deal, Ch4 does not produce a turn as she acknowledges the fact that En4's turn is still in progress. Additionally, within En4's turn, he stresses 5 words (line 5 to 6) and the emphasis on these words can be due to the fact that they relate directly to the example he is providing (Sidnell, 2013) of the idiom. In line 7, there is quite a long pause of 1.1 seconds and it is followed by En4 initiating multiple turns from line 8 to 11, which is an illustration of how the idiom can be used. Within En4's turn from line 8 to 11, he pauses 4 times, and he uses 3 pause fillers ('so', 'erm', 'eh') while stretching them. These stretches can indicate that he might be trying to think of a better way of explaining the idiom and thus he is delaying the production of his turn (Kitzinger, 2013). Ch4 does not produce a turn in line 12, which can indicate that she acknowledges the fact that En4 has a greater access than her in this specific domain, and as a result En4 continues with the example he is providing her (line 13 to 15). This is followed by Ch4 producing an acknowledgment token 'uh huh' in line 16 which is followed by En4 continuing with his turn production from line 17 to 19.

In this excerpt, En4 shows expertise in the area of English idioms through exercising his expert identity (Park, 2007) as an English person by producing long turns as he expands on the meaning of the English idiom 'to have a chip on one's shoulder'. On the other hand, Ch4 does not try to produce any turns after the inter-turn pauses (when a speaker finishes talking and no other speaker is expected to speak, this would be called an 'inter-turn pause') and by producing an acknowledgment token, she ascribes to En4 the identity of an expert and to herself the identity of a novice (Hosoda,

2006; Bolden, 2014). Both participants orient appropriately to the differences in expertise in the domain of English idioms, and through that they allow a learning opportunity to occur (Hosoda, 2006)

Prior to excerpt 5, En2 provided Ch2 with an explanation of the English idiom 'sweep her off her feet' and she then asked Ch2 whether there is a similar idiom in Chinese. Ch2 has told En2 the equivalent Chinese idiom, however he indicated that its meaning is slightly different, and in the following excerpt, En2 starts by indicating her surprise in terms of the meaning of the Chinese idiom.

Excerpt 5

```
1    En2:     ➔really?

2    Ch2:     uh huh

3             (0.2)

4    Ch2:     which (0.1) means (0.4) you guess you guess

5             it (0.5)

6    En2:     ➔THAT (0.5) they really don't like?

7    Ch2:     (0.7) yes

8             (0.1)

9    Ch2:     they hate him (0.3)[too   ]much

10   En2:                        [↑uh:::]

11            (0.5)

12   En2:     ➔you can't even live under the

13            sa[me WEATHE   ]R

14   Ch2:     ➔[((mumbling))]

15   En2:     ➔[is the]

16   Ch2:     ➔[ I    ] yes we (0.1) can't (0.4) uh::::
```

```
17              we can't (0.1) you know uh::: (0.1) wear

18              (0.5) the same weather

19              (0.1)

20   Ch2:       we [can't] [take it] on

21   En2:           [↑uh::] [↓uh::  ]
```

In excerpt 5, En2 starts by producing a turn 'really?' with high intonation 'which treats the answer as news—as worthy of comment—and invites possible elaboration' (Stivers, 2013: 205). In line 2, Ch2 produces a third-turn receipt token 'uh huh' which indicates that he agrees with En2's previous turn (Clayman, 2013) and thus proposes a sequence closure (Stivers, 2013). Ch2 produces another turn from line 4 to 5 as he tells En2 that she guessed the meaning of the Chinese idiom. In line 6, En2 tells Ch2 what she thinks the Chinese idiom means and she ends her turn with a rising intonation, and thus aligns herself along the novice/learner lines and Ch2 along the expertise/teacher lines (Bolden, 2014). After the pause in line 8, Ch2 provides En2 with a confirmation token by saying 'yes' (Levinson, 2013). In line 8, there is another pause which is followed by Ch2 producing another turn as he explains the meaning of the Chinese idiom. Within Ch2's turn in line 9, there is an overlap that occurs in the middle of his turn when En2 says 'uh' with high-pitched voice. The 'uh' could indicate 'a change-of-state from not-knowing to knowing' (Sidnell, 2013: 112) suggesting that she 'gets' what the idiom means. In line 11, there is another pause which is followed from line 12 to 13 by En2 summarising the information that Ch2 has provided her with and, by the end of her turn, there is an overlap as Ch2 starts producing a turn.

In lines 15 and 16, there is another overlap where both Ch2 and En2 start with their turn productions at the same time which can be problematic, although an overlap is usually repaired when one party drops out and lets the other speaker continue talking

(Hayashi, 2013). This happens in line 16 as En2 dropped out and Ch2 continued with his turn by saying 'yes we (0.1) can't (0.4) uh:::: we can't you know uh::: (0.1) wear (0.5) the <u>sa</u>me weather we [can't] [take it] <u>on</u>' . In line 21, En2 produces an acknowledgement token 'uh huh'. This could indicate that En2 is acknowledging and understanding what Ch2 is saying (Hayashi, 2013) and thus proposing a sequence closure (Stivers, 2013). To conclude, in this excerpt, the two identities of the participants are highly negotiable, as the roles of the teacher/learner have been reversed accordingly (Park, 2007) as Ch2 became the teacher and En2 the student.

Prior to excerpt 6, En1 has explained to Ch1 the meaning of the idiom 'to fly off the handle'. In excerpt 6, Ch1 tries to find out how often En1 uses this idiom.

Excerpt 6

```
1    Ch1:      ➔do ↑you::: (0.2) use (.) that a lot?

2    En1:      (0.6) erm:: (1.6) ↑yeah like (0.1) ↑yeah

3              (0.19) if you said that to someone they'd

4              defiantly know what you meant (0.5) I

5              WOULDN'T USE IT THAT OFTEN (0.1) but (0.3)

6              I've (.) I've defiantly used it before (0.3)

7              so uh (1.2) my mum uses it quite a lot (1.6)

8              erm but yeah that's (0.2) quite a well known

9              one (.) yeah °[definite]ly yeah (0.5)

10   Ch1:                    [ hmm     ]

11   En1:      definitely°
```

In line 1, Ch1 produces a turn by asking about the usage of the idiom that En1 has explained to her and she ends her turn with a rising intonation, which can indicate her uncertainty towards the subject (Hayano, 2013). In line 2, En1 starts by pausing for 0.6 seconds and subsequently uses a stretched pause filler ('erm') which is used to delay

the production of his turn (Kitzinger, 2013). He pauses again and he starts producing his turn which involves a number of pauses. Within his turn in line 5, En1 says that he would not use the idiom often and he says it louder than the surrounding talk (Walker, 2003). En1 then pauses again and this is followed by him telling Ch1 that he has actually used this idiom before (line 6). After another pause, he says how his mum uses it a lot and how it is a quite well-known idiom. He then ends his turn by saying that it is 'a well-known one' and he repeats the word 'definitely' twice and says 'yeah' which are both produced as a confirmation token (Levinson, 2013). In line 10, Ch1 produces an acknowledgment token ('hmm') which displays her alignment (Stivers, 2013) with En1's telling.

When Ch1 designs her turn as a question (line 1), by requesting more information from En1 regarding how often he uses the English idiom 'fly off the handle', she treats En1 as the expert in the field of the English idioms (Park, 2007). This is then followed by a long turn by En1 in which he explains to her that he does not use it that often but that his 'mum uses it quite a lot', and through that he ascribes to himself the identity of an expert (Park, 2007). In this excerpt, both participants agree that they do not share the taken for granted knowledge of the English idiom 'fly off the handle', and that there are cultural differences between them (Hosoda, 2006; Park, 2007; Bolden, 2014). This allowed a learning opportunity to occur (Hosoda, 2006) as Ch1 was able to learn more about the English idiom 'fly off the handle' and how often it is used.

Prior to excerpt 7, En3 has explained to Ch3 the meaning of the idioms 'to buy a pig in a poke', 'grin like a Cheshire cat', 'eat like a bird', 'be in the dog house', 'play chicken', 'slip of the tongue', and 'break a neck'. Thus, in excerpt 7, she starts by repeating all the idioms and then she asks Ch3 whether there are similar idioms in Chinese.

Excerpt 7

```
1    En3:      >to buy a pig in a poke< (0.3) >grin like a

2              Cheshire cat eat like a bi::rd be in a dog

3              house play chicken< and slip of the tongue

4              ·hhh in Chi↑ne:se oop sorry break your neck

5              yeah well done ·hhh are there (0.2) is there

6              anything ➔similar?

7    Ch3:      ((1.5 seconds during which Ch3 is gazing at

8              the handout))

9    En3:      ➔in Chinese?

10   Ch3:      ((1.2 seconds during which Ch3 is gazing at

11             the hand-out)) °eat like a bird°

12   En3:      ➔eat like a bird?

13   Ch3:      ((0.3 seconds in which Ch3 is gazing at the

14             hand-out while nodding))

15   En3:      ➔°yeah:?° is it the same?

16   Ch3:      ((0.3 seconds in which Ch3 is gazing at the

17             hand-out while nodding))

18   En3:      ➔the same meaning?

19   Ch3:      ((0.5 seconds during which Ch3 is nodding))

20             ·hhh

21   En3:      anything else?

22   Ch3:      ((5.1 seconds during which Ch3 is moving her

23             head from side to side))
```

In line 1, En3 starts by producing a turn as she repeats the first idiom in a rushed

talk. There is a pause followed by En3 continuing to repeat the rest of the idioms, again

in a rushed talk. From line 4 to 6, En3 continues with her turns and she starts by saying 'in Chinese', ending it in a rising pitch while emphasising the word 'Chinese'. The rising pitch here is produced as a way of indicating that En3 is asking a question or at least intending to do so (Enfield, 2013). En3 continues with her turn and, in line 6, she ends her turn emphasising the word 'similar'. By emphasising and stressing the word 'similar', En3 is suggesting a relationship between 'similar' and another reference which is in this case the word 'Chinese' (Sidnell, 2013). From line 7 to 8, Ch3 gazes at the hand-out for 1.5 seconds. In line 9, En3 produces another turn by saying 'in Chinese' and by ending her turn in a high pitch, which indicates that she has again produced a question (Enfield, 2013). The turn production by En3 in line 9 is a self-initiated self-repair as she realised that since Ch3 has not provided her with an answer from line 7 to 8, and thus she adds the words 'in Chinese' to clarify her question is addressed to Ch3. From line 10 to 11, Ch3 again gazes at the hand-out, and at the end of her turn she says the English idiom 'eat like a bird' suggesting that it is similar to a Chinese idiom. In line 12, En3 produces a turn by repeating the idiom and ending it again in a rising intonation which is produced here as a question that is inviting an answer (Heritage, 2013).

From line 13 to 14, Ch3 produces a nod as an answer while gazing at the hand-out. Nodding in this case is interpreted as a recognisable answer (Goodwin and Goodwin, 1986) for the question En3 has asked. Thus, nodding here is equivalent to the production of 'yeah', which means that an answer has been produced as a confirmation token (Lee, 2013; Levinson, 2013). En3 poses another question in line 15 by asking again 'is it the same' ending it with rising intonation. From lines 16 to 17, Ch3 nods again while gazing at the hand-out. En3 produces another turn in line 18 by saying 'the same meaning', and again ending her turn in a rising intonation. This leads Ch3 in line

19 to nod. Nodding in this case is recognised as a confirmation answer for the question En3 has posed which is equivalent to 'yeah'. Subsequently, En3 produces another turn as a question that requires an answer ('anything else?') and in turn, Ch3 moves her head from side to side which is equivalent to a 'no' in this case. Both participants are orienting to their roles accordingly without any competition for the floor thus leading to their turns to align with each other and for a learning opportunity to arise (Hosoda, 2006).

En3 tries to elicit information from Ch3 regarding the equivalent Chinese idioms to the English ones they have discussed. Through the formulation of her (En3) turns in lines 5 to 6 and also line 9, she is ascribing to Ch3 the identity of an expert and the one who is a representative of the Chinese culture (Park, 2007). By Ch3 providing En3 with the answers, she is treating En3 not as bona fide co-member (Bolden, 2014) of the Chinese culture and as someone who does not share with her the knowledge of Chinese idioms.

In excerpt 8, En3 is still trying to elicit from Ch3 more information regarding the similar idioms in Chinese to the English ones they have discussed.

Excerpt 8

```
1    En3:      no?

2    Ch3:      ((0.1 seconds during which Ch3 is moving her

3              head from side to side))

4    En3:      ➜they are very different?

5    Ch3:      ((0.8 seconds during which Ch3 is nodding))

6    En3:      ➜°yeah?° ·hhh

7    Ch3:      (2.7)°yeah°

8              (0.1)
```

```
9    En3:      yeah?

10   Ch3:      ((0.2 seconds during which Ch3 nods while

11             directing her gaze at En3 and then redirects

12             her gaze at the hand-out))

13   En3:    ➔ ·hhh (.) <do you have anything else that>

14             >DO YOU HAVE ANYTHING AT ALL< that's links

15             to animals?

16   Ch3:      ((0.4 seconds during which Ch3 is

17             gazing at the hand-out))

18   En3:      ·hhh

19             (0.1)

20   En3:      would you say:::

21   Ch3:      ((0.4 seconds during which Ch3 is nodding))

22             °yeah° (0.1) °a lot°
```

In line 1, En3 ends her turn with a rising pitch which indicates her uncertainty towards the subject and thus it is formulated as a question (Enfield, 2013) in order to get more explanation from Ch3 regarding the similar Chinese idioms. Ch3 then moves her head from side to side in line 2-3, which is considered as an answer to the question En3 has produced (Goodwin and Goodwin, 1986). In line 4, En3 produces another turn by again ending it with a rising pitch as she says 'they are very different?'. This results in Ch3 nodding in line 5 which is considered equivalent to her saying 'yes' (Goodwin and Goodwin, 1986). In line 6, En3 produces a minimal questioning 'yeah?' which Ch3 confirms with 'yeah' (Mandelbaum, 2013) in line 7 after a pause of 2.7. In line 8, there is a pause which is followed by En3 producing another minimal questioning 'yeah' in line 9. From lines 10 to 12, Ch3 directs her gaze at En3 while nodding as a way of saying 'yes', and then she redirects her gaze to the hand-out. In line 13, after an in-

breath, En3 produces a slowed utterance, and then she produces another rushed turn ('do you have anything else at all'). She ends her turn with a rising pitch which is produced here as a question (Enfield, 2013) that is directed towards Ch3. Ch3 in turn gazes at the hand-out which is then followed by an in-breath by En3 and a pause in line 19. En3 then produces another turn by saying 'would you say:::' while stretching the word 'say'. From line 21-22, Ch3 initiates a turn by nodding and by producing a confirmation token 'yeah' and then she ends her turn with 'a lot'.

In this excerpt, En3 elicits information from Ch3 by formulating her turns as questions (lines 1, 4, 6, 9, and 13-15) and, in turn, Ch3 provides her with answers. By doing so, the identities of the participants were reversed as En3 is orienting to Ch3 as the expert in the field of the Chinese idioms and she is acknowledging that she is a novice in that field (Park, 2007). Both participants are orienting to their roles accordingly as there is asymmetrical orientation to knowledge between them as they are not competing for the floor (Stivers, 2008; Stivers, Mondada and Steensig, 2011).

Discussion

Unlike different researches (e.g. Gudykunst and Nishida, 1994; Straffon, 2003; Helm, 2009; Pusch, 2009; Houghton, 2010) that adapt an etic approach to investigate 'interculturality', this research adapts an emic approach (Pike, 1967) in order to avoid imposing cultural differences on the participants and let that data speak from itself. The data show how asymmetries in knowledge between the participants do not occur automatically in interactions between NS (Ens) and NNS (Chs) as the participants made moment-by-moment decisions (Bolden, 2014) about who knows what, who is informing whom, and who is the less knowledgeable one in the area. Through these decisions, the participants were able to maintain asymmetry in knowledge by attributing to each other

the identities of expert or novice (Hosoda, 2006; Bolden, 2014). This asymmetry in knowledge displayed understanding between the participants as they showed a clear understanding of their roles as a teacher/learner and a NS/NNS. In addition, through the asymmetry in knowledge, the participants showed a clear understanding of how and when to access their domain of knowledge and this allowed learning opportunities.

Although there are various studies (e.g. Nishizaka, 1995; Mori, 2003; Hosoda, 2006; Park, 2007; Brandt & Jenks, 2011; Kitzinger & Mandelbaum, 2013; Bolden, 2014; Shrikant, 2018; Arano, 2019) that examine the concept of 'interculturality' and use an emic approach to unravel the construction of identity, there are not many studies that use this approach in a face-to-face tandem language learning context .Therefore, in terms of intercultural competence pedagogy, language teachers might benefit from this study in multiple ways. Language teachers could raise the students' awareness on how identities are constructed during interactions between people from different cultural backgrounds. For instance, English language teachers (e.g. pre-sessional, EAP, ESL and EFL) could discuss with the students the use of confirmation tokens/vocal continuers (e.g. 'yes', 'definitely', 'yeah' and 'uh huh'), how, by using them, one can ascribe to himself/herself the identity of a novice, and how by expanding on one's turn one can ascribe to himself/herself the identity of an expert. In addition, students could be made aware that by designing their turns as questions (e.g. requesting more information), as an example, they ascribe to themselves the identity of a novice and the person to whom the question is directed to the identity of an expert. Teachers could elaborate on these points by explaining to the students; the complexity of identity construction, how one's identity can change constantly (e.g. expert/novice, teacher/learner), and the importance of asymmetrical orientation to knowledge (e.g. interactants do not compete for the floor but rather find the right balance of switching from novice to expert and vice versa)

during interactions. Teachers could further elaborate on how an understanding of the complexity of 'identity construction' could impact how interactions develop and determine the direction these interactions take which potentially could lead to learning opportunities. This process could enable students to self-reflect on how they conduct their own identity when communicating with someone with a different cultural background than theirs and could potentially enhance the communication process.

This study has its originality and has several contributions to knowledge. First, this study is amongst very few studies that are conducted with English and Chinese postgraduate students within a tandem language learning context. Second, there are multiple models of intercultural competence/intercultural communicative competence that have been developed by various scholars and these models have been used in various studies. However, these models contain some flaws. Instead of trying to apply these models in this research, this study used CA to examine the characteristics of intercultural competence. By doing so, this study has shown how the participants ascribed to each other the identity of expert/novice which demonstrated cultural differences between them.

However, the study also has its limitations and shortcomings. A limitation is through this study's use of CA to analyse the data as CA relies on the analysis of single cases, which can be problematic as this means that these cases can never yield generalisable results. However, it is fair to say that this study has not been conducted in order to generalise the data towards all different types of tandem language learning but instead to understand how intercultural competence is achieved in that context and other similar contexts.

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Appendix: CA Transcription Conventions

[A single left bracket indicates the point of overlap

] A single right bracket indicates the point at which an utterance or

utterance

part terminates vis-à-vis another.

= Equal signs, one at the end of one line and one at the beginning of a

next, indicate no 'gap' between the two lines. This is often called

latching.

(0.0) Numbers in parentheses indicate elapsed time in silence by tenth of

seconds, so is (7.1) a pause of 7 seconds and one-tenth of a second.

(.) A dot in parentheses indicates a tiny 'gap' within or between

utterances.

word Underscoring indicates some form of stress, via pitch and/or

amplitude; an alternative method is to print the stressed part in

italics.

:: Colons indicate prolongation of the immediately prior sound. Multiple

colons indicate a more prolonged sound.

? A question mark indicates a rising intonation.

↑↓ Arrows indicate mark shifts into higher or lower pitch in the utterance-

part immediately following the arrow.

WORD Upper case indicates especially loud sounds relative to the

surrounding talk.

° Utterances or utterance-parts bracketed by degree signs are

relatively quieter than the surrounding talk.

< >	Right/left carets bracketing an utterance or utterance-part indicate speeding up.
·hhh	A dot-prefixed row of hs indicates an inbreath. Without the dot, the hs indicates an outbreath.
w(h)ord	A parenthesized h, or a row of hs within a word, indicates breathiness, as in laughter, crying, etc.
( )	Empty parent indicate the transcriber's inability to hear what was said. The length of the parenthesized space indicates the length of the untranscribed talk. In the speaker designation column, the empty parentheses indicate inability to identify a speaker.
(word)	Parenthesized words are especially dubious hearings or speaker identifications.
(( ))	Double parentheses contain transcriber's descriptions rather than, or in addition to, transcriptions.

(Adapted from Ten Have, 2007)