

Multilingual and intercultural communication competence, MICC (@Movi, JYU)

References and further information:

- Kokkonen, L. & Natri, T. (2024). Framework for multilingual and intercultural communication competence: Bringing forward a pedagogical perspective and assessment for learning. *JYU Studies*. 19-44.
<https://jyx.jyu.fi/handle/123456789/96336>
- Movis's task force: Competencies for internationalisation, teiija.natri@jyu.fi and lotta.o.kokkonen@jyu.fi

Multilingual and intercultural communication competence is at the heart of academic expertise. It can be seen as both a prerequisite for internationalisation and an objective. Internationalisation, on the other hand, can be seen at the level of an organisation or company, but also from the perspective of individual skills.

We define multilingual and intercultural communication competence (MICC) as an interpretation of effective and appropriate communication using linguistic and semiotic resources and repertoires in situations and contexts where interculturality and cultures are relevant to the interactants. MICC is situated, contextual, and evolving as a continuous and dynamic process based on interaction.

This multilingual and intercultural communication competence framework is based on the following underlying assumptions.

First, MICC consists of three **interrelated** elements: **attitudes/motivational factors, knowledge, and skills**. Sometimes it can be difficult to distinguish whether the interaction is influenced by motivation or, for example, by a skill-related phenomenon or circumstance. For example, the motivation to participate in multilingual situations is naturally a function of a person's previous experience and the linguistic resources available.

Second, MICC is both **appropriate** and **effective**, not forgetting the **ethical** aspects of communication. **Appropriateness** means a perceived fitness or the legitimacy of an interaction partner's behavior in social contexts and relationships. **Effectiveness**, in turn, refers to how interaction partners can achieve preferred or desired outcomes of social interaction. In addition to these two, **ethicity**, meaning the communicator's ability and willingness to take moral responsibility and behave in a way that does not insult others or create distrust, is strongly connected to multilingual and intercultural communication competence.

Third, we see MICC as **processual**. It is a lifelong learning process of becoming better at communication. MICC is also **situational** and **contextual**. The same behavior can be perceived as an appropriate expression of competence in one context but is subject to negative evaluation in another.

From the point of view of MICC, competence is only **demonstrated through interaction** with others. Both one's and other's interpretations in interaction situations are always needed. Although competence is seen as an interactional phenomenon, an individual's knowledge, skills, motivation, and attitudes influence how their competence is perceived in the situation.

The following list of MICC elements, not being comprehensive, comes from the literature on intercultural communication and linguistics, where multilingual and intercultural communication competence have been widely discussed.

ATTITUDES AND MOTIVATION		
Element / Aspect	Learning outcomes	Questions for reflection
Respect and interest/openness towards diversity	- I have a positive outlook on and interest in diversity - I am willing to withhold judgments - I am motivated to learn about cultures and diversities	- What feelings do you have when you meet someone speaking a mother tongue different from yours? / Who speaks a language you don't know very well? - How do you feel when someone acts the exact opposite of how you act in a situation? - What kind of people or groups do you notice yourself valuing less/more? Why? - Which kinds of people or groups do you want to get to know or don't want to have contact with?
Empathy	- I am willing to step into someone else's shoes - I am motivated to imagine as well as intellectually and emotionally participate in others' experiences - I want to understand others' experiences and worldviews	- Do you want to understand different perspectives, values, and norms? Why? - How would you like to be treated in a situation where you act differently or have different values and perspectives from others? - How would you like to treat someone who acts differently, or has different values and perspectives from you? - Do you find it difficult to put yourself in the position of some people? Who or how are those people? / What kind of people are they?
Motivation and willingness to engage in interpersonal relationships/communication situations with culturally diverse people and/or using different language repertoires	- I am willing and motivated to engage in interaction with people from different backgrounds - I want to understand different ways of initiating, developing, and maintaining interpersonal relationships - I am motivated to build and maintain diverse social networks	- Do you want to discover new ways to meet people and develop your interactions? How? - What value do you attach to your interactions and the networks they form? - What kind of people do you think are easy to get to know and build relationships with? Why? - Which kinds of people do you not want to get to know? Why?
Flexibility	- I want to adapt my communication to the context, situation, and other participants - I am willing to question existing generalisations, stereotypes, and prejudices - I want to take complexity into account and avoid generalisations - I am willing to consider different forms of multilingualism	- Are you prepared to adjust your behavior if your interlocutors act in a way you didn't expect? - Are you prepared to adapt your language to the current situation? How? - What do you do if you notice that your interaction is affected by some assumptions that you have? - What do you think about stereotypes and prejudices? - In what situations are you motivated to consider diversity and different perspectives/opinions? - In what situations do you have no desire to consider different perspectives/opinions?
Awareness of aspects related to cultural interpretations, judgments, and power in communication.	- I acknowledge power relations such as inferiority/superiority in communication - I am willing to critically view and level out existing power hierarchies in communication	- Have you noticed how power structures are reflected in interaction in different situations? Give examples. - In interaction situations, would you like to act so that they would be as equal as possible? How would you act? - How is power reflected in interactions? Who has it and why?
Confidence in culturally and linguistically diverse settings, situations, and relationships	- I have a positive outlook and confidence in intercultural and multilingual contexts and situations - I want to accept and manage my and others' uncertainty and anxiety in diverse contexts and situations	- Do you feel you can interact in multicultural and multilingual situations? How? - How do you deal with situations of uncertainty and anxiety, and do you have some control over these feelings? - How are your positive/negative attitude and confidence in interaction situations displayed? How does it affect the other participants?
Attitudes toward languages and linguistic repertoires	I acknowledge the value of all language competence, even partial competence	- What do you think about language skills and their development as part of your academic expertise? - How do you relate to interactions with people with basic language skills? - What do you value most in language skills: vocabulary accuracy, grammatical correctness, fluent pronunciation, or getting the message across? Why?

KNOWLEDGE		
Element / Aspect	Learning outcomes	Questions for reflection
Knowledge of communication, languages, multilingual repertoires, and different perspectives on culture(s) and language(s)	- I understand how communication influences and shapes our understanding of cultures - I understand that there are different perspectives on culture, interculturality, language, and language learning - I have knowledge about constructing and negotiating cultural and linguistic identities	- What knowledge do you have about languages and their characteristics? - What do you know about language learning? - What do you know about multilingualism? - What do you know about cultures and interculturality? What different perspectives on culture or interculturality do you know? - What does culture or interculturality mean to you? - How have language and culture been expressed in interaction in some situations that you have experienced?
Knowledge and understanding of aspects of power in intercultural and multilingual communication	- I understand the connections between language use, language competence, and power on personal as well as societal levels (relationships, global, political contexts) - I have knowledge of priorities, privileges, power, and pride linked to cultural and linguistic identity negotiations	- Can you identify different power issues related to language and language use? - In what situations have you had more or less power over others? What might have been the reasons for this? - How do you think privilege or pride is manifested in your interactions? Give examples.
Knowledge of one's identity, values, norms, and behaviour	I am aware of my values, attitudes, norms, and behaviour as a representation of my identity	- How would you describe your identity and its linkage to cultures and languages? - What are your values, attitudes, and patterns of interaction and how are they formed? How do they manifest in your interactions?
Knowledge of processes of othering, categorisation, and stereotypes and how they are manifested in communication	- I have knowledge of othering, categorisations, stereotypes, and prejudices - I know how othering, categorisations, stereotypes, and prejudices are used, manifested, enhanced, and challenged in communication - I understand how discrimination is linked to experiences of acceptance, belonging, and self-esteem	- What stereotypes and prejudices do you hold and where do they come from? - How have stereotypes and categorisation been manifested in any of the interactions you have experienced? - How do discrimination and stereotyping affect interactions and experiences between people?
Knowledge of what evokes strong feelings, such as uncertainty and ambiguity, and how to manage them	- I understand that novel situations and contexts can evoke (strong) emotional reactions - I know how to manage strong emotions and feelings in novel situations and contexts	- How do you feel in a situation where you do not fully understand what is happening, what the interactants mean, or whether they understand you? - What kinds of ways could you use in the situation to ensure that the emotions you are experiencing (or the emotions others are experiencing) do not overly interfere with your interaction?
Knowledge of elements and principles of communication in diverse settings and contexts	- I understand that my way of communicating (verbally and non-verbally) can be interpreted differently in different contexts, situations, and relationships - I understand that effectiveness and appropriateness in communication are situational and contextual	- How do you interpret silence in different interaction situations? Give practical examples. - How can time management, for example being late, be treated differently in different contexts and cultures? - Can you describe how in different situations and contexts competence can be assessed in different ways/competence can be perceived differently? - How well do you recognise how the situation/context (or language) shapes the features of interaction? Give examples.
Knowledge of language diversity and multilingualism	- I know a variety of strategies to manage the coexistence of several languages in understanding a situation - I know ways to employ my multilingual profile to strengthen, enrich, and diversify access to information, process, retain, and classify new information. - I know the fluidity and dynamism of languages and ways of language use	- What different viewpoints and approaches to language and language learning do you know? - How can you use your language repertoire in information search? - What strategies do you know for achieving understanding in multilingual situations?
Knowledge of languages and language learning	- I know my language competence and how to enhance my language and multilingual competencies - I have knowledge of assessing and evaluating language competencies	- What kind of skills do you have in different languages? What can you do in different languages and which situations? - In how many languages can you say hello or order in a restaurant? What about scientific discussions? - Can you identify your language resources and repertoire? - What language competence do you need to show appreciation/respect, demonstrate your expertise, etc.? - How do you best learn languages?

SKILLS		
Element / aspect	Learning outcomes	Questions for reflection
Flexibility and adaptability	- I can adapt my verbal and nonverbal communication according to the situation, context, and participants - I am able to take into consideration multiple perspectives - I can process and react to new and novel information - I am able to adapt language use to new situations and formulate thoughts in different ways - I can shift between languages to have situational flexibility and adaptability to contribute to understanding and the participation of members with diverse multilingual and multicultural profiles	- What do you do if you find that you and others do not understand each other in an interaction situation? - What do you do if you cannot find any common language with the person you are talking to? - How can you adapt your interaction to the other participants and the situation? - How do you enable everyone's participation in an interactive situation? - How can you consider and articulate different points of view in interaction?
Emotion regulation	- I can tolerate ambiguity: I can accept ambiguity and lack of clarity and deal with it constructively - I can regulate and manage my emotions and feelings in diverse situations and contexts - I am able to support others in situations, contexts and/or relationships of high uncertainty	- How can you manage excessive uncertainty and anxiety in new situations? - How can you support others in situations of uncertainty?
Interpersonal communication skills (to create and maintain social networks / interpersonal relationships)	- I can initiate, maintain, and enhance interpersonal relationships in diverse contexts and with individuals from various backgrounds - I am able to listen and express listening appropriately and effectively in diverse contexts and situations - I can argue and negotiate in diverse settings - I can give and receive social support appropriately and effectively in diverse settings	- How do you get to know new people? - How do you maintain your relationships? - How do you demonstrate listening in different situations, contexts, and relationships? - How do you give and receive support in different interaction situations? - Describe what makes a good negotiator. What skills should you develop to become a good negotiator?
Skills to reflect on and analyze one's own and others' communication	- I can understand my previously lived reality, values, norms, and behaviour, and how these are manifested in communication within diverse contexts, situations, and relationships - I can reflect on different elements of communication - I am able to analyse, identify, and compare linguistic elements in different languages and multilingual interaction	- How do your experience, values, attitudes, motivation, and skills influence your interactions? - Give examples of your values, attitudes, or skills that influence your interaction in different situations. - How well can you reflect on your interactions in different situations? - How well can you identify factors (e.g. linguistic resources, knowledge, skills, etc.) that influence your interactions with others? - How can you compare linguistic elements and how can this help you?
Critical thinking skills	- I am able to suspend judgment - I can critically view things from various perspectives - I can critically reflect on my interpretations in communication	- How well can you listen to and appreciate different opinions and views? - Are you able to see things from more than one perspective? How do you do it? - Can you question your interpretations in interaction and distance yourself from them by looking at them from other perspectives?
Language skills	- I can analyse linguistic data and understand how discourse contributes to the construction of information, opinions, ideas, ideologies, and consciousness - I can communicate appropriately and effectively in diverse contexts and situations - I am able to use reformulations, simplifications, repetitions, vulgarisations, and exemplifications to make oneself understood in one language	- How can you analyse whether language or language change influences the construction of knowledge or opinions? - What resources do you have to adapt your language use to the situation and can you, for example, change language if necessary? What languages can you use in the situation? - How can you adapt your language use to the situation in practice and, for example, make it easier for others to understand you?
Multilingual skills	- I can use/exploit my multilingual repertoire, and adapt language use in multilingual situations, e.g., breaking down the complicated information/paraphrasing and restructuring to cover gaps in vocabulary or structure (multilingual flexibility) - I can use codeswitching and code-mixing as communicatively and contextually functional devices - I am able to manage the coexistence of several languages in interaction and to switch smoothly from one language to another - I can exploit interaction for language learning and enlarging my multilingual and multicultural profile	- How smoothly can you communicate in multiple languages at the same time? - How can you practically adapt your interaction to the situation so that all parties are equally acknowledged and respected? - How can you use your knowledge and skills in interaction and your language resources to learn new things?