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Framing interculturality: A corpus-based analysis of on-line promotional discourse of Higher Education intercultural communication courses

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Abstract

This paper examines how intercultural communication (ICC) and the notion of culture are framed in on-line promotional discourse of higher education intercultural communication courses. It analyses a specialised corpus comprised of 14,842 words from 43 course websites of master's programmes in intercultural communication in the UK and the US—internationally, the two largest providers of such programmes. Through combining corpus tools with a 'situated meaning' approach, the analysis reveals that while a small number of courses acknowledge cultural 'complexity', culture is still very often reduced to an essentialised and static notion, despite growing criticism against such an approach in ICC literature. Intercultural communication is valorised as a combination of desirable skills and knowledge conducive to effective communication of different cultural groups and for those working in international arenas. Significant differences between the UK and US courses are identified with regard to the extent of associations with diversity-related social categories. The lack of interpretive, critical and constructivist positions on culture in promotional discourse is discussed in the context of neoliberal discourse and the current thinking towards professional competences dominant in Britain, North America, and other parts of the world.

1. Introduction

This paper analyses how higher education (HE) institutions present and promote the study of intercultural communication (ICC). The paper's main conceptual aim is to see how the

ideas of culture and interculturality are framed in HE on-line promotional discourse. Gaining insights into this will tell us something important about how the study of ICC is 'sold' in the international educational 'marketplace' at a time when the availability of HE programmes in the subject area is growing rapidly.

Since the introduction of ICC courses in the University of Pittsburgh and Michigan State University in the 1970s, the provision of ICC degree courses has expanded rapidly in higher education across the world (Martin, Nakayama, and Carbaugh 2014). In the UK, one of the national contexts which have seen the greatest growth, there were only a handful of universities offering such courses in the 90s, whereas nowadays there are over 30 universities providing degree programmes in the subject. There are a number of factors contributing to the boom. These include the increased opportunities for intercultural contact and the growing need for getting to know 'others' in the overall context of globalisation, the recognition of the importance of intercultural education in its various forms as part and parcel of internationalisation in higher education (Jackson 2010; Holliday and others in this special issue), the taking up of intercultural competence as a key skill in a range of contexts such as language education, human resources, business, teacher education, social work, engineering, health care and religious organisations (Deardorff 2009) and the commercialisation and availability of the training programmes, materials and literature with 'cultural differences' as a starting points.

2. From theoretical debates to ICC education

Against the backdrop of the boom in ICC courses, there have been paradigm shifts and theoretical debates within the field of ICC with regard to what culture is. The most significant development is a move from a positivistic, social science paradigm which, developed in 1980s, regards culture as something stable, fixed and shared by a group of people. Alternative paradigms such as interpretive, critical, constructivism or cultural realism have called for reconceptualisations and repositioning of the key issues of the field of ICC (for reviews, see Martin, *et al* 2014; Zhu Hua 2016). Questions have been asked about what culture is and is not (the interpretative paradigm); whether cultural differences are reified by those in power (the critical paradigm); how intercultural differences are socially or discursively constructed (the constructivist paradigm); and to what extent culture accounts for problems in interactions and how to acknowledge both individuals' agency and the role of deeper structures and mechanisms, of which culture is one component, in understanding the phenomenon under investigation (the cultural realism paradigm)?

The crucial differences in various conceptualisations of culture is well captured in Canagarajah's (2013) differentiation between a modernist understanding of culture with more recent 'postmodern' conceptions, where culture is seen as constructed, emergent, plural, performed, conflictual and fluid. He argues that

> developments in postmodern thinking prevent us from talking of culture in the singular any more, treating it as having some kind of integrated status…In other words, people don't always behave in specific ways because they have ingrained in them the values of this or that domain. (2013, 206).

Whereas traditional, modernist approaches to culture see communities as simultaneously centering around and integrating an autonomous reflection of certain core values, more recent 'postmodern' understandings do not treat communities as bounded or existing in separation.

These theoretical debates on conceptualisations of culture, notwithstanding its intellectual richness, inevitably leads to the questions of 'how' - often asked by many working on the front-line of intercultural encounters and ICC trainers and educators, i.e. how to deal with complexity of culture? How to apply these theories in practice? Among few available studies looking into the tension between theory and practice, Dervin and Tournebise (2013) found that the aforementioned theoretical 'turbulences' seem to have very little impact on the way intercultural education practitioners talk about 'the intercultural'.

Within such a context, this paper sets out to examine how culture and interculturality is framed in on-line promotional discourse of higher education ICC programmes. Following Dervin and Risager's (2015) definition, interculturality is used here as an umbrella term covering a plethora of terms referring to cultural diversity, for example, cultural differences, hybridity, multiculturalism, etc. Our analysis aims to reveal position(s) reflected in publicity materials and the thinking behind the ICC curricula. For instance, do the courses acknowledge cultural 'complexity', or is culture reduced to an essentialised and static notion? Is ICC seen as a way of viewing oneself and the world from different perspectives, or is it framed in terms of skills and competencies? Is there evidence of the influence of other disciplines in ICC courses, such as business studies?

Our exploratory questions are:

1. How do the course providers choose to frame and present 'ICC' to audiences?
2. What theories of culture do the promotional materials align with, or claim to align with?

3.   Corpus Methodology

Studies in ICC have increasingly used discourse-based approaches, to explore how meaning is constructed in text (e.g. Scollon, Scollon, and Jones 2012). Nevertheless, intercultural studies that have employed corpus methods have been relatively rare (see Belcher and Nelson 2013; Handford 2016), despite offering a potentially welcomed degree of empirical validity and generalisability (see below). One central aim of this paper is to demonstrate how interculturality, and conceptions of culture along with its inflections, can be explored using corpus methods in combination with other discourse methods (Sinclair 2004; Baker 2006; McEnery and Hardie 2012; Handford 2014, 2016).

To answer the research questions, this paper will therefore employ a corpus-informed discourse methodology to pinpoint frequent and significant lexical items in the discourse, such as 'culture', and analyse the particular meanings of such items in context. The particular meaning in a particular context is a 'situated meaning' (Gee 2005). A central assumption here is that words do not have meaning outside of the communicative practices they invoke (Gee 2005), and it is through analysing an item in particular contexts of use that

underlying meanings and ideologies can be inferred (Gee 2005; Fairclough 2010). In other words, items such as 'culture' can mean very different things and invoke different ideologies depending on the context, and a corpus-informed approach enables us to present replicable patterns and findings concerning such usages.

In this study, the second research question explores which meanings and ideologies are invoked in the promotional on-line material of ICC courses: for instance, when employing important items like 'culture' and 'intercultural communication', do the materials invoke a critical, interpretivist stance, or do they rely on more essentialist, traditional, conceptions? As such, the second research question, while building on the preceding quantitative results, will employ a more qualitative approach, particularly when exploring the extent to which culture is seen as a static entity in the texts. The first research question, in contrast, lends itself to a relatively more quantitative analysis through an exploration of frequent words and n-grams (that is, units of more than one word that co-occur), and statistically significant items (that is 'keywords', Scott 2011 – see below), in context. By exploring the co-text of these frequent items and keywords, the way, or ways, ICC is defined and framed can be inferred.

There are seven key steps, applied consecutively and where necessary iteratively, in answer to the first and then second research questions. The steps are a mix of the quantitative and the qualitative, the automated and the manual, and combine Sinclair's 'extended units of meaning' (2004) with Gee's 'situated meaning' tool (2005).

1. A corpus of the texts is created, and frequency lists and keyword lists are produced using corpus software (see below).
2. Specific items are manually selected from the automatically produced frequency and keyword lists.
3. The collocations of the items (that is, frequently co-occurring words) produced in Step 1 are pinpointed using the software.
4. Selected items are examined in the form of concordance lines, which is software-generated collection of the instances of the target item in co-text (see Figures 2 and 3 below). Concordance lines are the central tool in corpus linguistics (McEnery and Hardie 2012) because they show how the target item is used in a variety of contexts and allow for a qualitative analysis of the quantitative data (e.g. step 6)
5. Semantic categories of the keywords and frequent items can be automatically created using corpus tools.
6. By examining specific items across concordance lines, with reference to the wider sociocultural context, the said item's 'situated meaning' (Gee 2005) and 'discourse prosody'[i] (Stubbs 1996) can be inferred.
7. Longer stretches of discourse are examined 'manually', i.e., without the aid of corpus software, to ascertain whether the corpus insights are borne out in extended discourse, again through unearthing the situated meanings of relevant items.

As stated above, a situated meaning is the particular meaning a lexical item (word or multiword unit) has in a specific context of use (Gee 2005). Discourse prosody is defined here as a linguistic item's connotational meaning in context, that is the underlying evaluative

meaning the item has across a collection of contextually related texts. Such a definition explicitly recognises that the same linguistic item can have more than one discourse prosody, hence the relevance of Gee's 'situated meaning' concept. Corpus studies have repeatedly shown that, like keywords, discourse prosodies may be inaccessible to intuition alone, and require a corpus approach to be unearthed (Stubbs 1996; Sinclair 2004), and analysing patterns across concordance lines allows for discourse prosodies to be unearthed (Sinclair 2004).

There are several advantages of using a corpus-informed approach in the analysis of interculturality (see Handford 2014, 2016). Apart from the advantage of allowing for context-specific meaning to be pinpointed in relevant texts, such a corpus approach also enables the relative reduction of researcher bias (Baker 2006; Mautner 2009). The corpus tools throw up important items independent of the researcher's stance, which can then be qualitatively and closely interpreted in context. Specifically, statistically significant keyword lists (Scott 2011) are produced through comparing the corpus in question to a larger reference corpus. In this study, the specialised corpus is the Corpus of UK and US intercultural/cross-cultural communication master's degree website pages. The reference corpus used is the one-million word 'American English 2006' corpus, available on Wmatrix, a web-based software processing tool, and the primary corpus tools used were Wmatrix (Rayson 2009) and Antconc (Anthony 2015). Lists of multiword units were produced using Antconc, and keyword, single-word frequency lists were produced using Wmatrix. Also, the 'semantic categorisation' tool on Wmatrix was used to suggest underlying semantic features.

Another advantage of a corpus approach is that it easily lends itself to comparison of collections of texts. In this case, our CUKUS corpus can be broken down into the sub-corpora of CUS and CUK (the data from the US websites and the UK websites, respectively) and analysed when deemed relevant. While such a comparison was not our initial intention, the corpus findings suggested a more context-specific analysis, for instance the recurrence of certain religious terms. A further benefit of a corpus-informed approach is that the findings are replicable and therefore scientifically verifiable: as the data and tools are publically available, it is possible for the results to be checked by other researchers.

4.   Data

The decision to focus on ICC masters programmes offered in the UK and USA is governed by accessibility. Our preliminary analysis showed that a large majority of ICC courses are currently based in the two countries. Furthermore, their on-line promotional discourse is readily available on-line and in English, which makes corpus compilation feasible.

The CUKUS (the combined corpus of UK and US) corpus is made up of 14,842 words, from 43 master's courses at 34 institutes. As a testimony of the rapid growth of ICC courses in the UK discussed in our introduction, there were almost twice as many courses in the UK as in the US, which is reflected in the two sub-corpora's word totals (5,208 words in the corpus of US abbreviated as CUS, and 9,634 in the corpus of UK abbreviated as CUK). To allow frequency comparisons between the two sub-corpora, totals are normalised (or in other words, adjusted to a common scale) to density per 10,000 words.

The development of the corpus consists of three stages. The first stage was identifying the criteria. When deciding whether to include a course in the corpus, the following criteria were observed. Only courses matching all these criteria were included:

1. Does the course have the term 'intercultural', 'crosscultural' or 'cross-cultural' in the course title?

2. Is the course accredited by an external, independent, educational body[ii]?

3. Upon completion of the course will students be awarded a master's degree (such as MA, M.Ed, or MSc)?

4. Is the institution where the course is provided a nationally-recognised university?

The second stage involved searching for ICC programmes in the UK and the US. To find the relevant courses, the authors used a variety of approaches. Firstly, we searched the website 'Find a Master's': http://www.findamasters.com/search/, which contains details of over 22,000 master's degrees worldwide. From this, there were 717 hits for 'cross-cultural' and 'crosscultural', and 212 hits for 'intercultural'. The search items 'cross cultural/intercultural university masters' were also input into Google, producing just over 500 links, which again were checked individually.

In the third stage, the potential links were analysed and any borderline or ambiguous cases discussed and decided upon by all three authors. The final list of 43 ICC programmes to be included in the corpus was then confirmed. Once the list was finalised, the course description pages were downloaded and converted into text format so that they could be analysed using the corpus software. Specific information such as lists of modules, or quotations from students were removed so that the data included only comparable 'course descriptions'. In some cases, universities offered two differing course description links for the same course (for example Sheffield University has a 'postgraduate' link and an 'MA' link for the same course); in such cases the page containing more information was used. The list of programmes included in our final corpus can be found in Appendix 1.

5.   Findings

5.1 How is ICC defined and framed?

In order to unpack how ICC is defined and framed in these websites, the most frequent and statistically significant items used in the pages and their situated meaning will be explored.

Frequency analysis

The most frequent items in the corpus of US data and UK data (CUKUS) feature several 'functional' words (see Table 1), such as prepositions, as is the norm among frequency lists. Nevertheless, the situated meaning of a preposition can vary according to the co-text, as is shown below. The table also demonstrates that the most frequent content words are 'intercultural' and 'communication'. This is unsurprising, although it is interesting that 'international' also features so frequently, and this will be discussed further below.

Table 1 Top 20 frequent words in CUKUS

Order	Frequency.	Item
1	898	And
2	684	The
3	569	Of
4	511	In
5	419	To
6	293	A
7	212	intercultural
8	204	communication
9	182	For
10	154	international
11	150	Cultural
12	128	With
13	118	Is
14	109	You
15	104	As
16	104	Will
17	102	This
18	99	Language
19	98	On
20	98	Research

Words collocating with 'intercultural communication'

To explore which items co-occur with the term 'intercultural communication' itself, we first look at which verbs collocate with 'intercultural communication'. These verbs are 'study', 'specialise', 'research', 'manage', 'influence' and 'cover'. These collocations arguably give the impression that ICC is a coherent, accepted and perhaps uncontested knowledge system or body of knowledge.

The top collocate of 'intercultural communication' is 'in', and the nouns that collocate with 'intercultural communication' include 'training (in)', 'education (in) and 'skills (in)'. Such items thus form the following lexico-grammatical pattern:

(Noun of learning related to abilities/competencies) + 'in' + 'intercultural communication'

This pattern serves to reinforce the sense that ICC is an accepted body of skills and knowledge that can be acquired on an academic course. These two patterns suggest that ICC is an established and uncontested system; to examine this working hypothesis further, definitions of ICC in CUKUS were examined.

To know how ICC is defined in the data, a corpus approach is not appropriate because definitions can be written in a variety of ways. A manual reading of the data reveals that

there are very few websites which offer explicit definitions. One exception is the Maryland website page, which states:

> *Intercultural Communication is the study of the ways in which social structuring, social assumptions and language use bear on interactions between members of different cultures.*

The emphasis in this definition seems to be on interactions and how it is influenced by macrocosmic factors such as social structure and assumptions (though it is not clear what is meant by social assumptions here) and language use.

Although most courses do not explicitly define ICC, many do discuss its purposes and applications. The following extract is from Penn University's M.S.Ed. specialising in ICC:

> *The core courses examine linguistic and social practices that occur in face-to-face interaction, the cultural expectations and ideologies that inform communicative practices, the cultural dynamics of power and identity, and the practical application of these principles in a variety of work environments.*

This sentence contains many of the words and concepts around which current 'turbulences' in IC research revolve, such as social practices, ideologies, and the dynamics of power and identity. In contrast, the Maryland site talks of 'members of different cultures', implying that culture is reified and static with corresponding members, while the Penn University extract pointedly does not.

A further conception of ICC is offered by Bedfordshire's MA. Here we see a strong emphasis on the discursive aspects of ICC, although 'cultural differences' are described as a given that can be explained in terms of language and behaviour.

> *Moving beyond cultural value approaches to culture and communication, it draws on the latest developments in rapport management theory and pragmatics/discourse analysis. The core units focus on culture and communication issues and develop your abilities to analyse and explain cultural differences in language use and behaviour, and also to design effective intercultural training programmes.*

Keyword analysis

A further way to explore how ICC is framed in the texts is through a keyword analysis, which identities unusually frequent words in the corpus in comparison to a larger reference corpus. Appendix 2 shows the top 100 keywords for CUKUS[iii], that is, the items which occur with statistical significance in comparison to the reference corpus. Keywords allow for a powerful understanding the specific nature of the texts or genre in question (Baker 2006; McEnery and Hardie 2012), and can unearth items and patterns that both raw frequency lists and the naked eye miss. The keywords show what is typical and specific about the ICC courses: the key language constitutes the central ideational and interpersonal (Halliday 1989) meta-functions of the sites. One of the most striking aspects of the list is the high number of ideational terms that are concerned with nation: 'international', 'US', 'transnational' and 'multinational'. Also, several items are concerned with the world of work: 'business',

'professional', 'career(s)', 'healthcare', 'marketing', 'management', 'organizations[iv]' and 'workplace'. However, when comparing the CUS and CUK keywords lists, it is evident that items concerned with the world of work are more typical in UK courses. Moreover, several UK-based courses have the terms 'business' or 'professions' in their titles, and in some cases the courses may be partly taught through business schools within the university in question.

Using Wmatrix's 'semantic category' tool, which automatically organises the keywords in a specific corpus according to pre-ordained semantic categories, one of the most important semantic categories in CUKUS is 'language'. This is unsurprising for a course with 'communication' in its title. However, a closer analysis reveals that items related to language and language analysis (e.g. 'language', 'languages', 'English', 'linguistics', 'stylistics', 'discourse analysis') are far more likely to occur in the UK data (CUK) than in the US data. This may be because many UK courses are run from Applied Linguistics departments (for example, Warwick and Newcastle Universities, and Birkbeck College, University of London).

Corpus searches can indicate what is important by showing what is frequent or statistically significant; conversely, relative infrequency or indeed absence of other items can indicate that certain words and concepts are under-emphasised or ignored. By combining corpus methods with critical discourse analysis (e.g. Baker 2006; Mautner 2009), a critical interpretation of such 'gaps' is possible: critical linguistic approaches have shown the absence of something can be as telling as its presence (Foucault 1981; Fairclough 2010). For instance, several terms concerned with the practical or theoretical challenges in ICC and frequently occurring in the literature are absent in the analysis. 'Othering' and 'stereotyping' occur only once in CUKUS (on the same university page), and the related terms 'other' and 'stereotype(s)' do not occur at all. 'Identity/ies' occur only five times in total, four of which are in the UK. Neither 'problem' nor 'problematic' occur at all, and 'problems' is found a mere four times. Its more positive sounding synonym (Handford 2010, 192) 'issues' does occur fairly frequently and is a keyword, appearing again largely in the UK data. Furthermore, there are very few complex nouns (ending in *isation* or *ism*) that deal with processes associated with ICC environments and sites of contact: 'internationis/zation' only occurs five times, whereas 'globalis/zation', 'nationalism', 'discrimination' 'colonialism' 'exclusion', and more critically oriented terms like 'commodification' 'consumerism', do not occur at all. Also, the term 'ideology' does not occur, and 'ideologies' occurs once. What these missing or infrequent items have in common is that they reflect a more critical, political stance, and thus their absence suggests the on-line materials are not concerned with such a stance. This issue will be discussed further in the next section.

Following the initial finding that certain groups of items are more typical in either CUS or CUK, we conducted a more thorough comparison of the separate keyword lists. One type of item that appears far more in the CUS is language thematically related to religion. The words 'mission' and 'missional' both appear in the top 100 keywords, and a closer analysis reveals that they are both concerned with religious missions; furthermore, the most frequent five-word n-gram in CUKUS is 'the global mission of God' (occurring seven times). Wmatrix's 'semantic category' tool shows that one of the top 20 categories in CUKUS is religion. However, virtually all of the frequent religious items (including 'God', 'scripture', 'gospel', 'churches') are from US universities, specifically Christian universities who offer an

accredited MA in ICC. Even though the general semantic category is 'religion', as the listed items show, the focus is very much on a Christian perspective: other religious but non-ecclesiastical terms, such as 'Allah' or 'Hindu' do not occur at all, and a close reading of the materials reveals a largely Christian evangelical, missionary motivation. In understanding how ICC is framed, and indeed marketed for specific groups, noting this particular sub-category of a section of the US context is important.

There are other groups of items that are far more frequent in CUS than CUK, which arguably reflect the domestic concerns of the US context, and thus frame ICC across several websites in a categorically different way from the UK courses. These items include 'diversity', 'diverse', 'ethnic', 'race', and 'racial'. To allow for frequency comparisons between the two sub-corpora, the frequencies of these five items related to ethnic diversity are normalised to density per 10,000 words (Figure 1).

Figure 1 The comparative normalised density for items related to ethnic diversity per 10,000 words
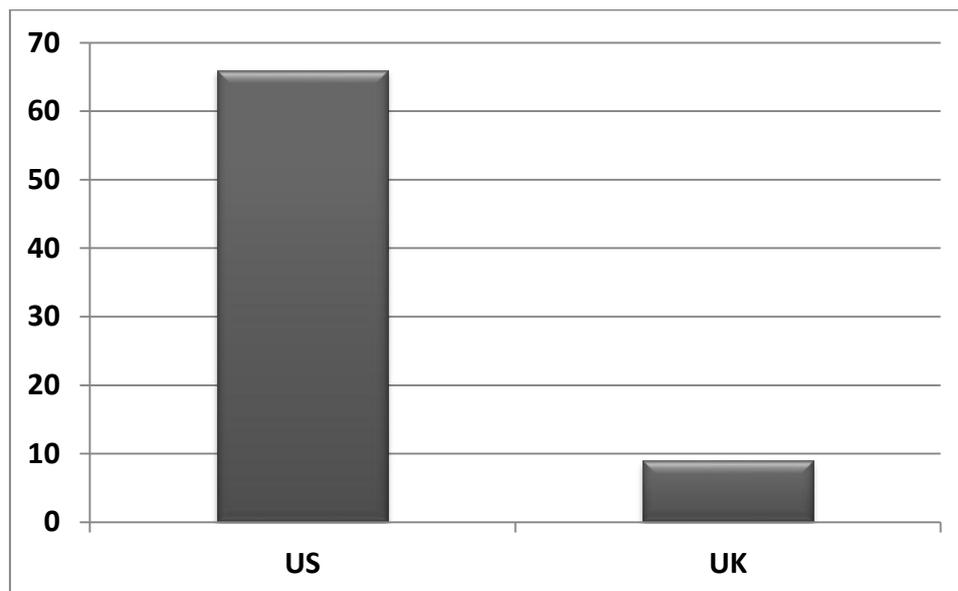
The item 'U.S.' is one of the CUKUS keywords, although all uses occur in CUS (in comparison, there are no occurrences of 'U.K.' or 'UK' in CUKUS). If these two findings are considered together, it could be argued that in the US courses, ICC is framed at least partly in terms of the intra-national issues that US citizens face. In other words, the domestic national context is a site for regular intercultural communication, which involves interactions between people with ethnic and racial differences but who share the same nationality. In addition, the density of the term 'community' in CUS is 38, whereas in CUK it is only 7 per 10,000 words. It seems, therefore, that CUK, despite the racial/ethnic diversity in the UK's larger urban centres, does not reflect the same concerns as the US's domestic context; this may be

because anecdotal evidence suggests that a higher proportion of ICC students in the UK are from overseas and the courses are designed with international students in mind, meaning the UK context is less relevant for their study. This may also explain the finding that (social) class is not mentioned on the UK sites, despite its apparent importance in UK society.

Further corroboration is provided by different frequency of occurrence with regard to the word 'gender' and 'class' between the two sub-corpora. Gender, although not in the top 100 keywords, is mentioned by three US sites, but only one UK site, while class (as in social class) is mentioned by two US universities. This may well be the legacy of the scholarly interest back in the 1960s and 70s in the US when the notion of culture, among US-based scholars, was not confined to interracial or international relationships. It also included gender or social class to improve social cohesion within a society (Moon 2002).

Concordance and discourse prosody

In order to further understand how texts are framed (Tannen 1993), corpus linguistics has been a powerful tool for unearthing the stance, or evaluation (Hunston and Thompson 2000) implicit in texts. One of the ways evaluation is achieved is through adverbs, and an interesting aspect of the CUKUS keyword list, particularly beyond the top 100 keywords, is the number of adverbs, such as 'effectively', 'highly', 'successfully' and 'critically'. While 'effectively' and 'successfully' have positive connotations, 'highly' can also collocate with positive or negative items, for instance 'highly valued' or 'highly embarrassing', thus changing the discourse prosody of the items it partly constitutes. An analysis of the concordance lines for 'highly' in CUKUS (Figure 2) shows that in this context it is used systematically with a positive discourse prosody, forming phrases such as 'highly competent', 'highly successful', and 'highly employable'. Nine of the ten occurrences happen in the UK sites.

Figure 2 Concordances for 'highly' in CUKUS

languages and cultures of study , but , more importantly , as	highly	competent , eagerly sought-after intercultural mediators in
relations in contemporary Europe and beyond . In this	highly	interdisciplinary course , taught by Cambridge specialists and in
those who have high-level intercultural knowledge and skills are	highly	sought after in the workplace . The MA in Intercultural
a wide range of cultural groups , whether it is for developing a	highly	successful multicultural and multilingual team , or involves
to offer this Masters programme and our graduates are	highly	employable , in industries such as human resources , education or
Masters programmes. Designed for those who wish to become	highly	effective intercultural communicators in international and social
edge of research , ensuring our graduates are well-informed and	highly	employable . Research focuses on cross-cultural communication
from the resources and expertise this brings , as well as from a	highly	experienced teaching team. As a student here , you will have

In this way you will develop professional skills that are	highly	relevant to the job market . There is an emphasis on the practical
across cultures , hence developing professional skills that are	highly	relevant to the job market . You will have an option to learn a
increasing demand for proficient speakers of English , and for	highly	qualified teachers of English as a foreign language . An advanced

The positive discourse prosody of 'highly', while having little significance in isolation, arguably contributes to the overall positive or optimistic nuance of the course descriptions. Furthermore, analysis of the concordance lines shows that the positive evaluation concerns employability and future success at work, in other words a very *instrumental* framing of the value of the courses.

While both 'critical' and 'critically' both appear in the top 100 CUKUS keywords, 22 of their 23 occurrences are in UK course descriptions. Figure 3 shows the concordance lines of 'critically'. As with the adverb 'highly', words that are concerned with criticality and critical thinking are again more typical in CUK.

Figure 3 Concordance for 'critically' from CUKUS

management practice . You will be offered the opportunity to	critically	evaluate the activities of business , governments and multi-
relevant research techniques required to investigate and	critically	analyse international marketing issues . You will : develop
project management . You can expect to have engaged	critically	with the major intercultural questions and issues relevant to
develop intellectual abilities to argue cogently , concisely and	critically	at an advanced level . Learning Outcomes At the end of the
At the end of the course, participants should be able to :	Critically	discuss the concept of culture and its role in the
their relevance to intercultural communication and training ;	Critically	evaluate research into cross-cultural , intercultural and
issues , and gained the ability to assess these approaches	critically	and to evaluate their usefulness to their own needs and
intercultural training programmes . You will also examine and	critically	evaluate theories and research findings relating to
teaching of English as a Foreign Language and your ability to	critically	apply teaching practices to training for intercultural

As can be seen, 'critically' often collocates (that is, co-occurs with higher than random frequency) with another keyword 'evaluate', thus fulfilling the interpersonal function of evaluation (Halliday 1989), and things that are critically evaluated in the texts include

business-related activities, the concept of culture, and research into ICC. While these instances may give the impression that criticality is a feature of ICC courses, in fact over half of these instances occur in only two institutions (Newcastle University and Warwick University). We would argue that this is surprising, given the importance of a critical approach in academic study in general, and particularly in relation to effective ICC. Indeed, critical thinking towards one's own actions and thoughts, and towards assumptions and stereotyping, are arguably two of the most crucial ICC 'skills' (e.g. Byram 1997).

In summary, our corpus analysis of the course description of ICC master's programmes across the UK and the US shows that these course websites, with the very few exceptions, assume that the field or subject matter of ICC do not need to be defined. ICC courses are generally framed as having an international outlook, referencing international markets, the business world, organisations, education, or differences. Studying ICC means acquiring 'highly relevant and sought after' skills in ICC and knowledge of a culture, which, in turn, will help one to work or communicate 'effectively' and 'successfully'.

The corpus analysis also allows us to compare the trends in the UK and the US, although we did not start with the *a priori* intention of positioning the two locations as different in their approaches to ICC; rather, our bottom-up approach to the data led to such a comparison. We have found a number of differences in the way ICC is framed across the two sites. First of all, in the US sites, ICC courses tend to be associated with diversity in areas such as ethnicities, race, gender, and social class.   For several Christian universities which offer ICC courses, the subject of ICC is deemed important to develop their students' cultural sensitivity in 'overseas missions'. In the UK sites, there is a strong emphasis on the relevance of ICC to business and professional development. Language features prominently in the UK sites too: some courses cater for language students and some courses include the study of language use and discourse analysis in their curriculum. A small number of courses also explicitly include criticality as part of their aims and objectives.

5.2 What theories of culture do the promotional materials align with?

We now turn to our second research question - what theories of culture do the promotional materials align with, or claim to align with? We shall start with the following quotation found from one website:

> As part of the requirements for the degree, students acquire skills in intercultural communication, and knowledge of a specific culture or region of the world.

In the above quotation, 'culture' is seen here as a reified object, somewhat equivalent to a 'region of the world'. The course promises to teach 'knowledge of a specific culture', thus drawing on 'modernist' (Canagarajah 2013, 207) conceptions of culture as homogenous, closed, essentialist, static, centred and separated, as discussed in our introduction above. This kind of conceptualisation underlies many course websites, as borne out by the analysis below.

Overall trend: Culture as a distinct and static entity.

Among the top 30 keywords in CUKUS (discussed in the previous section), five are formed from the root 'culture': 'intercultural', 'cultural', 'cross-cultural', 'culture' and 'cultures'. In total, there are 240 instances of such forms, comprising 1.6% of all items in CUKUS. The 'wildcard' function on Antconc pinpoints all the collocates of a root term and its forms, such as the items involving the root 'cultur*' (covering the five keywords listed above). Several of the top collocates directly preceding and directly succeeding the item in question, such as 'cultures' are prepositions of movement or position e.g. 'across', 'in' and 'between'; typical examples include '…interpret via English between and across cultures', and 'the challenges of working across cultures'. Indeed, the most frequent two-word n-grams involving 'cultures' are 'between cultures' (occurring seven times), and 'across cultures' (occurring five times). The significant recurrence[v] of such collocations arguably reflects a conceptually important tendency: to see culture and its forms are as distinct and static. The alternative approach to culture, would arguably see it collocating with other prepositions, such as 'use culture for', 'access cultural practices to…', '(go) beyond culture' or '(negotiate) through culture', or '(align) with culture', reflecting a more dynamic and performative interpretation.

While a bottom-up corpus analysis can unearth underlying patterns across repeated uses, it is less effective at finding patterns in extended discourse. For this, a manual reading of the texts, again employing Gee's notion of 'situated meaning' (Gee 2005), can be more effective. A close reading of the texts can also ascertain whether the corpus insights are supported or contradicted in longer stretches of the texts. In our case, a close analysis largely supports the corpus finding of 'culture as a distinct and static entity'. For instance, the following fairly typical extract operationalises 'modernist' notions of culture as homogenous and static. Something that needs to be 'bridged':

> *Effective global communication requires that people understand both international and intercultural differences. Success is based on communicating goals and bridging differences.*

It also reveals that, as with the above quotation, there is a strong association between culture and nationality. In some cases there is an implication of equivalence. For instance, one course page opens with the following questions:

> *Do people fall in love in the same way in every country?*
>
> *What makes a good leader in Chinese (and other, non-Western) societies?*
>
> *How might we help migrants best settle into their new culture?*

In all three of these questions, the implication is that nationality can be conflated with culture. There are further examples of direct equivalence, such as 'in some cultures (e.g., Saudi Arabia)'. In other sites the equivalence may be more implicit. For example, the following quote highlights the types of job course graduates take up, all of which are defined at the *international* level.

> *Graduates often pursue careers in:*
>
> *Study abroad advising*

> *International student and scholar advising*

> *International admissions and recruitment*

In the religious (US-based) master's course descriptions, we also see a strong preference for the national:

> *Men and women interested in planting churches will receive an education that equips them to successfully plant and grow churches in cross-cultural communities around the world.*

This reflects the international (Christian) missionary motivation of the religious courses.

While such culture-as-nationality equivalences are evident on many sites, some course descriptions do invoke a more complex set of equivalence, for instance:

> *the exploration of issues that arise in communication between cultural groups (including linguistic, social, racial, ethnic, national, gender, and other groupings).*

Even though the above quotation operationalises a notion of culture that we, the authors, see as more in tune with current research into interculturality, there is still a 'modernist' implication of culture as static, bounded group, rather than culture as 'postmodern' performance or fluidity. In other words, culture is seen as a product rather than a process, as a noun rather than a verb (Street 1993), as evidenced by the preposition 'between'.

In the next section we will analyse the two keywords 'cultures' and 'culture' to further explore these themes.

Cultures vs Culture

In CUKUS, there are 46 occurrences of the work 'culture' and 28 of 'cultures'. There is a difference in their frequency (see Figure 4) and use, in the US and UK contexts.

Figure 4 Normalised densities of culture vs. cultures in the UK and US sites per 10,000 words

Normalised densities of *culture/cultures*

	US 'culture'	US 'cultures'	UK 'culture'	UK 'cultures'
Value	~23	~24	35	~16
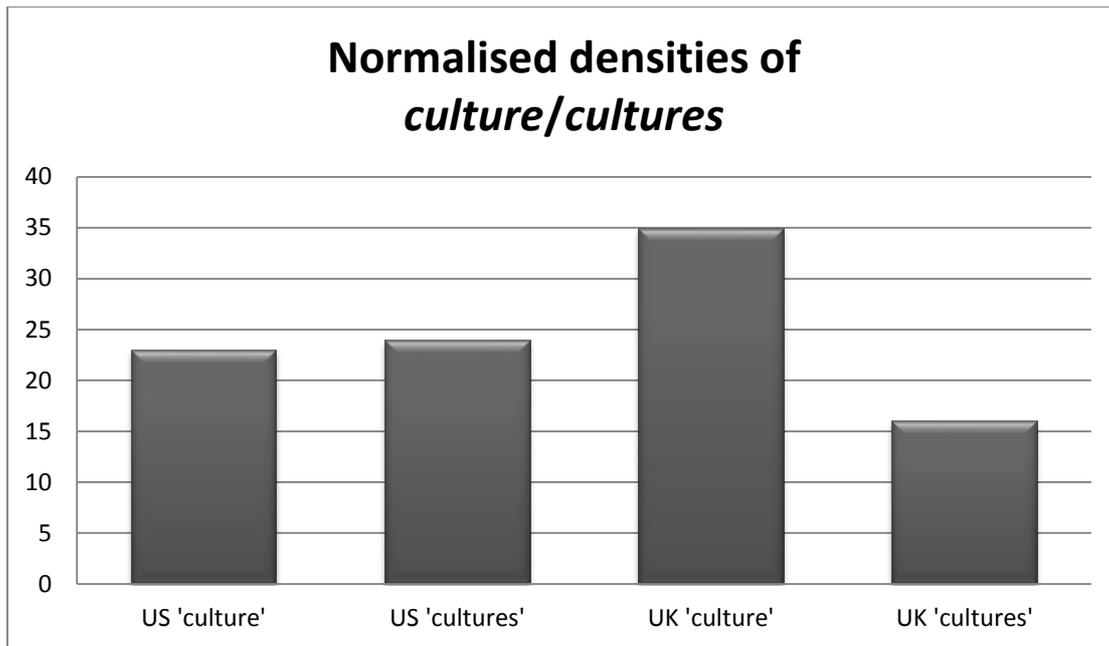
Whereas 'culture' and 'cultures' are used with roughly equal frequency in CUS, 'culture' is used far more than 'cultures' in CUK. Furthermore, in the UK data, 'culture' occurs far more frequently than in the US data, whereas 'cultures' is used somewhat less. An examination of the concordances of 'cultures' reveals that words associated with 'difference' often collocate with it, for instance 'diverse cultures', 'different cultures' and 'cultures different from their own'. While the preceding examples are all from CUS, the n-grams 'between cultures' and 'across cultures' are far more typical in CUK. However, both contexts use the term in its sense of a collection of distinct, contained, homogenous groupings, despite the different lexico-grammatical patterns they may use. Furthermore, in terms of its discourse prosody, while a connotation of explicit negativity is not evident, there is a strong connotation of 'difference' across the texts, especially difference from the implied centredness of the subject (and thus implying the difference of *others*).

When we compare the use of 'culture', however, some considerable differences in use are evident. As Figure 4 shows, 'culture' is about 50% more frequent in CUK than in CUS. In CUS, the most frequent use of 'culture' is as a singular, or an example, of the plural 'cultures' in the sense outlined above, for instance 'a specific culture' or 'US culture' or 'proficiency in the target language and culture'. While there are some instances of this meaning in CUK, we also find a different sense of the word. A comparison of CUK and CUS reveals that 11 of the 34 occurrences of 'culture' in CUK form the noun phrase 'of culture', and this phrase does not appear at all in CUS. A close examination of the concordance lines of 'of culture' reveal the following pattern, centred around the noun-phrase 'the (noun) of culture':

> (verb) +(understanding) of the (noun) of culture (and communication) in….

Syntactically, all but one of these occurrences are found in the object or complement position in the sentence, with the subject position filled by the imagined student or practitioner. In the noun position, 'role', 'impact' 'application(s)', 'concept', 'levels' and

'issues' occur. For instance, in the corpus exist phrases such as 'gain a greater understanding of the role of culture in psychology', or 'assess and leverage the impact of culture in management', or 'understand the role of culture in various business theories'. Clearly, the sense with which 'culture' is being used here contrasts with that of the primary use in CUS. Instead of being conceptualised as singular, specific, and distinct, with a discourse prosody of 'difference', here it is used in a more abstract, but arguably more generative, sense, with a discourse prosody of 'complex agency': culture makes things happen. This sense is also apparent in many of the other occurrences of 'culture' in CUK, for example 'you will learn about culture, language and power', thus implying equivalence between the three.

To sum up, the corpus analysis on the word culture(s), followed by a close reading of its situated meaning, reveals a predominant orientation to a static notion of culture, differences between us and others and association between culture as nationality. For some courses (more apparent and frequent in the UK than the US), culture is also used in a way which implies, rather than foregrounds, its agentive power and its complex relationship with other facets of society such as power and language.

6.   Discussion and Conclusions

The corpus-informed discourse analysis methodology employed in this study enabled us to examine the situated meaning of significant terms such as culture and diversity in context with a degree of objectivity and generalisation. Our findings highlight and particularise the nature of the tensions around culture and interculturality in how universities choose to frame and present their master's level ICC programmes to external audiences.   In terms of the basic definition and framing of 'culture', its situated meaning in much of the data, particularly in CUS, tends to associate with a more static understanding of culture and, in some cases, conflate culture (or cultures) with diversity-related structural categories such as religions, nations/nationalities, ethnicities, races and social classes.   This conflation of large-scale, static and *a-priori* categories is motivated by a keenness to highlight the desirability of diversity and difference, but may have the effect of reinforcing intercultural communication as a means that 'we' can interact effectively with 'others' and hence reifying cultural differences. Also evident is a bias towards a 'differentialist' stance (Devin & Tournebise 2013) and the 'binary, even antagonistic orientation to culture' (Canagarajah 2013, 210) noticeable in research aligning with the positivistic, social science paradigm which essentialises culture as the normative social psychology of a large-scale category of people (e.g. Hofstede, Hofstede, and Minkov 2010).

A minority of the promotional discourse in CUKUS, with more examples from CUK than CUS, did seem to align with the post-modernist approach to culture as discussed in Canagarajah (2013) and reviewed earlier in this paper. It is however, perhaps surprising that among institutions like universities, purportedly at the forefront of theory-in-practice, this is a minority position. This, we argue, is a particularly interesting and revealing finding from our study, perhaps indicating a lack of infiltration by more interpretive, critical and constructivist positions on culture and interculturality into what can be seen, from a western perspective

at least, as one of most important and main arenas of contemporary, ICC - higher education (see Introduction to this volume).

Seeking an explanation as to why this might be so, two ideas present themselves. Firstly, according to Bourdieu and Wacquant (2001), in recent years certain culture-related language items are frequently used by institutions in 'advanced societies'. The preferred terms they cite include several items, or their semantic partners, prominent on the CUKUS keyword list, such as 'multiculturalism', 'global' and 'diversity'. Other items that are noticeably absent include 'class', 'exploitation' and 'inequality'. They discuss the frequently used term 'multiculturalism' as a discourse, which they argue is a paradigmatic example of cultural shift, in that it obfuscates the increasing social inequalities and competition for cultural capital through emphasising cultural or racial pluralism. Universities' promotional materials may simply be reflecting this obfuscation. A second possibility relates to the marketing of ICC programmes in the neoliberal jobs market. Here, intercultural communicative competences are positioned as desirable and marketable graduate attributes in the globalised market place. Such competences fit more comfortably within a modernist framework, which allows for a relatively clearly-patterned indexing of skills and knowledge about interacting with members of static, distinct, categorized, culturally 'other' groups. They also sit comfortably with a drive towards increasing 'international' student recruitment to university programmes as part of internationalisation strategies centred around income generation (Svensson and Wihlborg 2010). A more critical orientation to culture as advocated by Dervin & Tournebise (2013), operationalising theoretical advances, exploring exceptions, instabilities and processes rather than structures, and placing justice at the center of ICC education, may not be readily indexed and incorporated into curricula.

Two avenues for further research are presented by our findings. Firstly, it is important to gauge how the possibly broad-brush orientations to culture presented in the on-line promotional discourse we examined in this study are realised in what is actually taught and learned on higher education ICC programmes. It is possible that more nuanced perspectives will emerge to at least partly counterbalance the 'culture-as-given' picture evident in most of the shop window material presented by universities. Secondly, further research could very usefully explore, perhaps on a comparative, case study basis, how the different orientations to culture and interculturality relate to differences between disciplinary areas. The extent to which, for example, business schools tend more towards a culture-as-given position, whereas applied linguistics department lean more towards a critical, interpretive or constructivist position, may tell us something about how these disciplinary areas define themselves and their places both in academia and in the wider societies.

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Appendix 1

Intercultural communication course websites included in CUK and CUS sub-corpora (retrieved in July 2014)

UK University name and course title	Number of words
The University of Manchester MA in ICC	401
Birkbeck College MA in ICC for business and professions	133
Newcastle University MA in Cross Cultural Communication	448
Newcastle University CCC and Applied Linguistics	308
Newcastle University CCC and International Management MA	231
Newcastle University CCC and International Relations MA	238
Newcastle University CCC and Education MA	236
Newcastle University CCC and Media Studies	266
Newcastle University CCC and International Marketing MA	201
Anglia Ruskin University ICC MA	392
University of Sheffield	305

ICC MA	
University of Sheffield ICC and International Development	441
Warwick University ICC for Business and Professions MA	804
University of East Anglia ICC MA	504
University of Bedfordshire ICC MA	762
Canterbury Christ Church University ICC and Professional Practice MA	310
University of Huddersfield MA Business English and ICC	571
University of Huddersfield MA in ICC	597
De Montfort University Intercultural Business Communication	274
University of Durham *ICC and Education*	359
Leeds University Professional Language and IC Studies	405
Birmingham University *CC Management*	285
Brunel University *CC Psychology*	230

Edinburgh Napier University MSC Intercultural Business Communication	261
University of Central Lancashire Intercultural business communication MA	290
University of Surrey ICC with International Business	254

US University name and course title	*Number of words*
University of Pennsylvania MS (Ed) in Intercultural Communication	241
University of Denver MA in International and Intercultural Communication	187
University of the Pacific MA in Intercultural Relations	528
University of Florida MA in International/Intercultural Communication	755
University of Lesley MA in International HE and Intercultural Relations	547
University Of Houston Clear Lake MA in Cross-cultural studies	187
University of Maryland (UMBC) MA in Intercultural Communication	551
University of Oklahoma MA in International/Intercultural Communication	171
Bowling Green State University	324

MA in cross-cultural and international education	
University of Alaska Fairbanks MA in Cross-cultural studies	66
Wake Forest University Masters in Intercultural Services in healthcare	169
Brown University Masters in ESL and cross-cultural studies	394
Columbia International University MA in IC Studies	294
Trinity International University MA in Intercultural Studies	279
Biola University MA in IC Studies	237
Johnson University MA in IC Studies	357

Appendix 2

Top 100 keywords in CUKUS

1. intercultural	31. programme	61. diversity
2. communication	32. issues	62. enhance
3. international	33. in	63. degree
4. language	34. settings	64. workplace
5. cultural	35. practical	65. dissertation
6. cross-cultural	36. academic	66. US
7. research	37. pathway	67. Developing
8. and	38. languages	68. Mission
9. skills	39. interaction	69. Designed
10. students	40. careers	70. Learning
11. MA	41. focus	71. Offers
12. Understanding	42. linguistic	72. Missional
13. Program	43. range	73. Internship
14. Course	44. media	74. competence
15. Business	45. module	75. relations
16. professional	46. marketing	76. theory
17. linguistics	47. theoretical	77. diverse
18. knowledge	48. approaches	78. including
19. graduates	49. expertise	79. evaluate
20. culture	50. multicultural	80. career
21. studies	51. theories	81. prepares
22. develop	52. provides	82. healthcare
23. global	53. management	83. specific
24. study	54. participants	84. culturally
25. contexts	55. CCC	85. transnational
26. cultures	56. Training	86. specialism
27. teaching	57. Graduate	87. multinational
28. education	58. Organizations	88. courses
29. english	59. Masters	89. critically
30. modules	60. educational	90. analysis

91. critical
92. focuses
93. development
94. effectively
95. will
96. differences
97. areas
98. variety
99. specialist
100. interdisciplinary

[i] 'Discourse prosody' is a contested term, with a range interpretations and applications. The term 'semantic prosody' is also used for the same or related concept (see Louw, 2003; Stubbs, 1996; Sinclair, 2004).

[ii] This second criterion was introduced because there are many courses in the US that claim to be masters degrees, but which require minimal study and considerable payment.Unsurprisingly these programmes are not accredited by any independent body.

[iii] Log Likelihood scores ranging from 1556.8 for item #1 to 55.73 for item #100, reflecting the items' statistical significance (P < 0.000001).

[iv] As spelling conventions are different in the US and UK, and the reference corpus was American English, the UK data was changed to follow US conventions.

[v] In corpus studies (see O'Keeffe *et al*, 2007), there is debate whether a minimum of between 10 and 20 occurrences of an n-gram/multi-word unit in a million words indicates importance; therefore five or seven occurrences in 15,000 words suggest considerable importance.