June 11, 2018
Second Meeting of Intercultural Communication Reading Group

Jannik—to reflect on our own personal approaches to this, our positions; intended to be safe space in the context of a multi-disciplinary program; we might be unsure about the terms, we should relate to each other in the spirit of hospitality

Jannik—framing the idea of juncture, contextualizing it; similar to the idea of shifting paradigms in philosophy of science; Jennifer and he talked about it and had both read Stuart Hall etc. on juncture, where there’s not a solution but conflict between competing or differentiated paradigms—comparison to waves in feminist theory, where paradigms keep shifting and there’s no solution

Jannik—there are different places where student are in relation to these junctures, some will have a more solid; p. 22 in Halualani et al.

Brett—hesitation in Arts stream around enforcing English as language of communication, there’s a particular political history that leads to this hesitation

Sandra—even when we approach the teaching of academic writing or literacy more generally we try to make the students critical consumers and users of language; always asking the question of how someone is positioned, what choices they have, and how they will inevitably position themselves, and how that can also mean—maybe unwillingly—stereotyping and marginalizing others; if we’re not using English we’re also marginalizing other students, unless they’re also providing translation to help others follow along—we need to acknowledge hegemony but we have good, inclusive reason to use English as well

Brett—the need to interact with cultural insiders; ideas for bringing direct-entry and VC from similar courses together for shared events or activities

Sandra—potentially giving students incentives, like a gift card, to meet with someone outside VC and report back, ways to structure conversations with people outside the program; her own dissertation work studied individual networks of practice, and students need a better understanding of what kind of effects and benefits these networks of interaction have

Katja—on how English for academic purposes is also a language used among researchers who are not Anglo/North-American, and how that shifts the center of hegemony of English; the effort that many Arts instructors make to include authors who aren’t of Anglo-heritage and might write in English as an additional language and the effect it has in shifting the center of that research conversation

Sandra—on models of world Englishes, and Indian English now having its own codified grammar; having an awareness of all of that work and using it to inform our thinking and interaction helps recognize that everybody has a right to use the language in whatever ways that help them accomplish the needs they have

Laura—where’s the line between us trying to teach them the English that we speak and other, more gestural elements of polite interaction?

Sandra—it’s important on our end not to feel offended, what appears rude might not be rude; we also need to help them understand that this is about community and respect, we have power and authority but we’re not authoritarian, and we’re also hear to acknowledge and to learn

Anka—that learning was also something that was missing in Zimmermann’s article, it was a one-way street where international students needed to learn from domestic students and not also the other way

Sandra—in exit survey we asked students about what the appreciated about intercultural nature of VC, and lots of them talk about food and greetings; recent death of Anthony Bourdain and how he spoke about how it’s through food that he could open up conversation and get to know who people

Brett—we miss a lot of opportunity in the first month because we’re so focused on school and also have our own lives

Anka—in the gift card model, what if we gave the non-VC student the gift card and asked them to make a connection

Jannik—it’s not useful to think of these intercultural juncture in an innocent way, different facets of domination play out in VC

Brett—there was a subset of South Korean students in science stream this year who felt very much the domination of Mandarin-speaking students

Jannik—one of the suggestions coming from Zimmermann is that it’s more important what’s happening outside the classroom; do we have a responsibility to facilitate those extra-curricular social moments?

Sandra—from the get-go there was an awareness that it is our responsibility to provide these spaces; initially we had a website where the idea was to help students chart their progress of extra-curricular activities; the whole idea of living in residence was to further facilitate these encounters; each stream also organized outings, and we still do but less so; but it’s hard to systematically track the benefits for those activities, to have engagement from the students who needed it the most, and to make it sustainable; perhaps we can revisit what has been done and press the reset button and try it anew

Brett—peer coaching and peer studying sessions work better if he went to those and that made students more likely to show up; perhaps choose a prof who could be the person to attend a certain session

Laura—as we grow this year to 500 students, how do we engage those on the periphery who really do need that extra language practice

Sandra—we could do an open house where we showcase different cultures in VC

Jannik—wondering about the idea of what we should be doing in our classrooms, accepting that there are broader outcomes—intercultural communication outcomes—that are broader than discipline-specific and course-specific outcomes, and how expecting other outcomes to happen outside of class is not a productive approach

Jeannette—intercultural communication objectives are hard to pull off in our classes when there’s such dominance of one cultural group

Sandra—right now we don’t have intercultural communication outcomes, but maybe we should, and if we do have to think about how to structure it on multiple levels, intra- and extra-curricular activities; new notion of translanguaging; re-examining out curriculum and making explicit some of the implicit assumptions we make, what constitutes good practice and good habits in order to then help students navigate difference