Language and intercultural student interactions: Insights from a cosmopolitan agency perspective

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Background

- ***Cosmopolitan agency*** (CA) as a hallmark of meaning intercultural interactions (Kudo et al., 2020; Oikonomidoy, 2019)
  - CA defined as 'reflexive expression of openness, inclusion and morality beyond cultural and personal difference towards a better future' (Kudo, 2022)

- This agency may favour students with high English proficiency (even in non-Anglophone countries where English-medium instruction (EMI) is promoted under internationalisation initiatives).

- Yet, the role of language in students' (dis)engagement in intercultural interactions from CA and other agency perspectives has received limited attention.

  cf. agency (Sawir et al., 2012), power dynamics (Jon, 2021), linguistic/cultural capital (Colvin et al., 2015), intracultural norms (God & Zhang, 2019), scale making (Song & Xia, 2020), translanguaging (Ou et al., 2020)
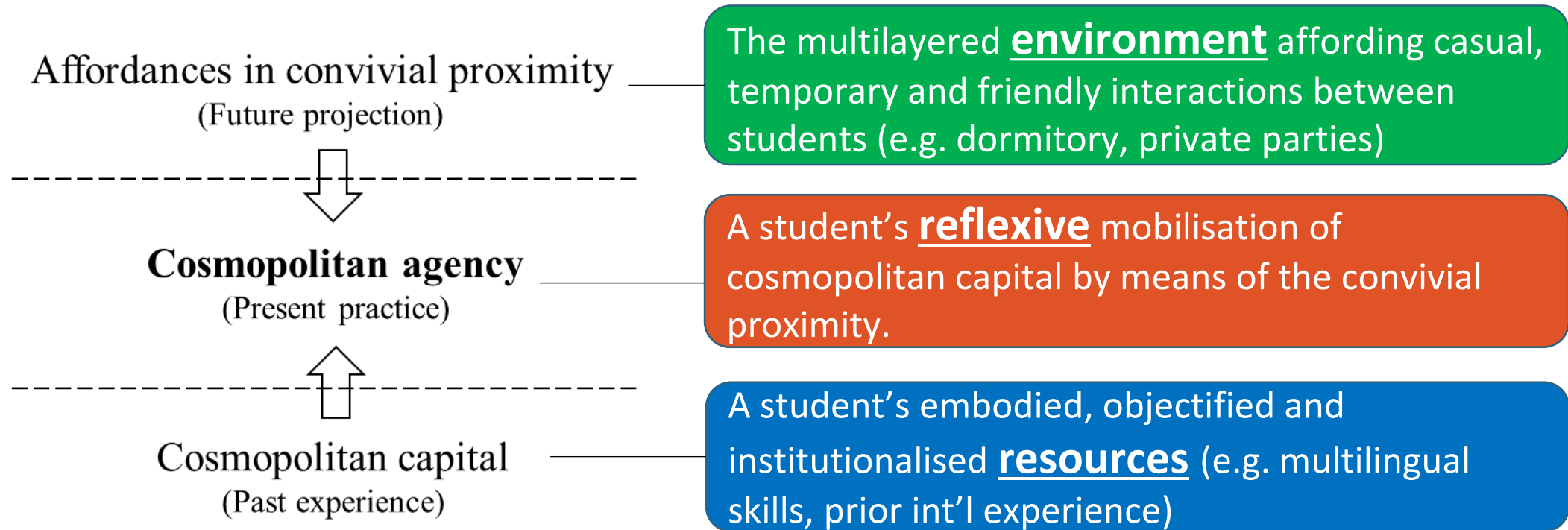
Aim and structure of this presentation

Provide new insights into the role of language in intercultural interactions from a cosmopolitan agency perspective

- Multidisciplinary literature on: (cosmopolitan) agency; intercultural interactions; and multilingualism (e.g. translanguaing, scale making)
- Interview data collected at three universities in two non-Anglophone countries: Japan and Finland

1. Ecological and person-in-context (EPiC) conceptual framework of CA (Kudo, 2022)

2. Two salient themes

    1. Three kinds of interculturality with varying degrees of creativity and inclusiveness
    2. Translocal linguistic capital as an enabler of critical cosmopolitan agency that intervenes in linguacultural inequalities

3. Directions for future research and practice

Ecological and person-in-context (EPiC) conceptual framework of cosmopolitan agency (Kudo, 2022)

Affordances in convivial proximity
(Future projection)

The multilayered **environment** affording casual, temporary and friendly interactions between students (e.g. dormitory, private parties)

Cosmopolitan agency
(Present practice)

A student's **reflexive** mobilisation of cosmopolitan capital by means of the convivial proximity.

Cosmopolitan capital
(Past experience)

A student's embodied, objectified and institutionalised **resources** (e.g. multilingual skills, prior int'l experience)

Theoretical proposal: CA emerges at the dynamic experiential interface between cosmopolitan capital and affordances in convivial proximity.

- Students utlise a linguistic repertoire (as cosmopolitan capital) to engage in intercultural interactions.

- Informal curriculum and non-curriculum environments tend to afford CA.

Qualitative interview data

	Pine U (Japan)	Bamboo U (Japan)	Birch U (Finland)
Research sites			
- Language for instruction	Mostly Japanese	Japanese and/or English	Finnish and/or English
- Int'l student ratio	2%	50%	NA
Participants			
- Academic level	Undergraduate	Undergraduate	Postgraduate
- Disciplines	Arts, economics	Arts, business	Education
- Domestic students	11	10	9
- International students	9	12	11
- Total	20	22	20
Language for intercultural interactions*	**Japanese, English, others**	**Japanese, English, others**	**English, others except Finnish**

* English as a lingua franca even at Pine
  Very limited use of Finnish at Birch (cf. Japanese at Pine and Bamboo)
  Use of other languages (e.g. Mandarin, Spanish)

Theme 1: Three kinds of interculturality with varying degrees of creativity and inclusiveness

1. **Global** interculturality: Students utilise a global lingua franca (e.g. English) to explore *global* connectivity beyond (perceived) cultural and personal differences.

2. **Local** interculturality: Students utilise a host national language (e.g. Japanese) to explore *local connectivity* beyond (perceived) cultural and personal differences.

3. **Glocal** interculturality: Students utilise a multilingual repertoire (e.g. translanguaging) to explore *creative connectivity* beyond (perceived) cultural and personal differences while they may run counter to institutional language policy (Ou et al., 2020).

- Limitations of global and local interculturality:

  '… interculturality contributes to creating cultural comfort zones for a particular group of people while constructing *zones of absence* for some other groups' (Kumar & Welikala, 2021, p. 3)

- Institutional affordances and constraints:
  - Birch U, where international students were not expected to be proficient in a local language (i.e. Finnish), afforded only global interculturality.
  - Pine U and Bamboo U afforded all kinds of interculturality, but Bamboo (with a bilingual policy) afforded more glocal interculturality than Pine.

Interculturality (= translocality)	Spoken language(s)	Found in	Interview quotes
Global	Global, esp. English	Pine Bamboo Birch	*'… when international students first contact you and think, 'Oh, he is Japanese, but he speaks good English very well', you can get along with them'* (Yusaku, DS at Bamboo).
Local	Host national	Pine Bamboo	*'… one international student asked me to coach him on Japanese, because he had job interviews in Japanese soon. So we practiced interviewing together these days'* (Takeshi, DS at Pine).
Glocal	Code switching	Pine Bamboo	*'I have a qualification for teaching Japanese. … and I offered to tutor an international student in Japanese. … when I have some questions about English, I can easily ask her in return'* (Takeshi DS at Pine).
	Translanguaging	Pine Bamboo	*Amalia (IS): I cannot speak only English or only Japanese*ね *(yeah). Yes, why? Why?* *Haruka (DS):* わからない。 *(I don't know why.)* *Amalia (IS):* わからない。 *(I don't know why.) I think many* 留学生 も *(international students, too) not only me like this. They, they* 混 ぜる *(mix), they mix it.*

- *Code witching* assumes 'the existence of different languages as structural and cognitive entities' (Li, 2018, p. 13).

- *Translanguaging* uses 'one's idiolect, that is one's linguistic repertoire, without regard for socially and politically defined language names and labels (Li, 2018, p. 19).

Theme 2: Translocal linguistic capital as an enabler of critical cosmopolitan agency that intervenes in linguacultural inequalities (cf. Jon, 2012, Colvin et al., 2015)

Critical cosmopolitan agency (CCA): a reflexive expression of openness, inclusion and morality with *a critical outlook on unequal power relations*.

- Self-efficacious students with 'translocal linguistic capital' (e.g. resources to translanguage) exercised CCA.

  'I said to my friends who don't want to speak in English that it's OK … Just come and let's see how things go. You can just listen if you want. You don't need to participate in the talking.' (Maija, DS at Birch, volunteered as an international student buddy).

- Prior experience as a linguistic minority afforded autonomous reflexivity (Archer, 2012) conducive to CCA.

  '… I was the only exchange students, so everybody was just like coming into me and "Who are you and why are you here?" and I got a really warm welcome there. … almost no one talked English. So I really had to learn Spanish. … after the Erasmus I was here just with the Finnish students. They became kind of boring for me because I didn't have a challenge. …and really soon after my exchange I felt like I need to have something.' (Maija).

Four distinct contributions

1. Three kinds of interculturality vis-à-vis language use

2. Geopolitcal and institutional affordances for language use and interculturality

3. 'Translocal linguistic capital' as an enabler of critical cosmopolitan agency that intervenes in linguacultural inequalities

4. Prior experience as a linguistic minority affording autonomous reflexivity and critical cosmopolitan agency

Directions for future research and practice

- Applicability of the explored themes in different national and institutional contexts, including Anglophone contexts

- The role of multimodal and multisensory resources (e.g. gestures, emoticons, voice, online: Ou et al., 2022)

- Intersectionality: interculturality emerging from language use in dynamic interactions with other cultural dimensions, such as gender and religion

- Negative experiences of interculturality

- *Institutional interventions*: providing students with opportunities to practice translocal linguistic capital that permits creative and inclusive interculturality (e.g. translanguaging).

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