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Running head: INTERCULTURAL MEDIATION

Intercultural mediation: Social, linguistic and psychometric considerations

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School of Psychology

PREVIEW

Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate and Post-Doctoral Studies of the University  
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Psychology



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## Abstract

Educational research investigating second language (L2) learning proposes that interculturally competent individuals have the capacity to act as mediators during situations of conflict between members of distinct cultural communities (Alred & Byram, 2002; Gohard-Radenkovic, Lussier, Penz & Zarate, 2004). The following studies aim to systematically investigate this proposal. The first study examines the linkages between aspects of language learning (e.g., L2 contact and confidence) and the use of mediation behaviours among a sample of minority group members. The results indicate a general need for a strong first language identity in order to become involved as a mediator in a conflict scenario. However, the results also point to the need for further assessment of the measure of intercultural mediation. The second and third studies respond to this latter issue through use of modern and classical test theory approaches to instrument assessment among both majority and minority group members. In particular, the second study points to a need to distinguish between the status (minority vs. majority) of the groups involved in the conflict scenarios as well as whether members of the witness' in-group are perpetrating or victims of discrimination. Informed by the results of the second study, the third study outlines the development and assessment of a revised version of the Intercultural Mediation Measure. Following these assessments of the intercultural mediation measure, the final study explores the relative importance of status (minority vs. majority) and role (perpetrator vs. victim) in the prediction of intercultural mediation behaviours and the predictive capacity of first and second language attitudes and representations in the use of nondiscriminatory behaviours. Among a host of revealing results, the analyses indicated a trend of greater mediational involvement in conflict

scenarios when the in-group is perpetrating the conflict toward a positively viewed out-group. This research speaks to the capacity individuals have to demonstrate and encourage positive intercultural relations. The results are discussed in the context of L2 learning, intergroup theory, and directions for future research.

PREVIEW



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PREVIEW

## INTRODUCTION

In the 1960s, Lambert and his colleagues initiated an examination of the social psychological correlates of second language acquisition (see, e.g., Lambert, 1977; Lambert, Gardner, Barik & Tunstall, 1963; Lambert & Anisfeld, 1969). Countering earlier views that bilingualism leads to developmental deficits, Lambert's research found consistent intellectual, cognitive and tolerance-promoting benefits of bilingualism. Although this research demonstrates affective and cognitive benefits, it does not venture into behavioural consequences of second language acquisition. This latter issue is central to the proposed thesis. In particular, given the exposure to more than one linguistic community, does bilingualism facilitate a willingness to demonstrate anti-discriminatory behaviours by prompting individuals to act as brokers or mediators in situations of intergroup conflict or miscommunication? The main goals of the proposed studies are to examine this question and to establish those aspects of language learning that may come into play in involving oneself in situations of conflict during intercultural encounters.

Much of the research exploring the mediating potential of bilinguals has centered on the linguistic brokering role of children of immigrants. Morales and Hanson's (2005) review suggests that "...[children] often serve as translators and interpreters for their nonfluent parents and extended family" (p. 472). In many cases, children come into contact with and gain competence in aspects of the dominant culture sooner than their parents (Acoach & Webb, 2004; Buriel, Perez, De Ment, Chavez & Moran, 1998). As a result, these children take on an important liaising role between their familial environment and the dominant culture (Weisskirch, 2005).

Similarly, when looking at immigrants' children as adults, Ng (2007; Ng, He & Loong, 2004) found that the second generation (parents) can play a major role in brokering the relationship between the first and third generations. By virtue of being educated or employed in the dominant culture and their longstanding exposure to their own ethnic culture, the second generation is particularly well-suited to understand the perspectives, first languages and cultures of the other two generations. Thus, mediators can bridge communication gaps that may otherwise remain unresolved or become conflictual. Ng (2007) argues that "...the study of communication brokering offers what hopefully is a breath of fresh air and cause for optimism..." (p. 88).

The potential for mediation is also recognized beyond familial contexts. From an educational perspective, Gohard-Radenkovic, Lussier, Penz and Zarate (2004) suggest that "The teaching/learning of modern languages seems to us to be the discipline *par excellence* for intensifying the openness to other cultures..." (p. 53; see also Loveday, 1982; Lussier, Auger, Urbanicová, Armengol, De la Serna & Concepción De Miguel, 2004).

Byram (1997; Alred & Byram, 2002) identifies the development of this openness and eventually intercultural competence as a process of acquiring five elements. Initially, to enter into situations of successful intercultural contact, individuals require sensitivity to their own cultural lens to identify preconceptions accompanied by an effort to give value and credence to the other culture (*savoir être*). Further necessary is an understanding of other individuals' viewpoints and how these perspectives could influence interlocutors' views of one another (*savoirs*). Following these two preconditions, intercultural competence or what Byram (1997) refers to as being an "intercultural speaker" represents

the ability to and ongoing participation in interpreting (*savoir comprendre*), discovering (*savoir apprendre*) and interacting with (*savoir faire*) the other culture.

Although much of this knowledge and skill can be developed and honed in the language learning classroom, Alred and Byram (2002) propose that intercultural competence can be extended beyond the classroom environment in the form of social action; specifically, to the ability and willingness to act a cultural mediator.

Gohard-Radenkovic, Lussier, Penz and Zarate (2004) propose the following definition of a cultural mediator: "*The cultural mediator is a social agent who designs and puts in place devices that make it possible to restore meaning where meaning has broken off, namely, he or she provides the one who does not understand with the means to understand*" (p. 219).

With high levels of intercultural competence, it becomes possible to accept the validity of opposing cultural perspectives and find solutions to this opposition that do justice to both groups (Byram & Fleming, 1998).

A reality of the mosaic that represents Canada is that cultural differences and potential conflicts will exist among individuals sharing the same community. Given the diversity in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2001), the likelihood of intercultural contact incites a clear need for a greater understanding of how individuals become willing to take social action by acting as cultural mediators. Coinciding with Ng's (2007) optimistic view of cultural brokers, intercultural competence can facilitate intercultural communication by enabling individuals to act as mediators during conflicts between those from distinct cultures.

Given that examinations of cultural mediation have been limited to familial contexts (see, e.g., Tse, 1995; Morales & Hanson, 2005) and theorizing from educational researchers, there is much to be discovered through the study of cultural mediation in everyday encounters. The proposed thesis aims to fill this gap by developing a sound assessment of cultural mediation and exploring potentially relevant variables that predict a willingness to use non-discriminatory behaviours and mediate in situations of intercultural conflict. Ultimately, understanding variables that influence the likelihood of intervention in situations of conflict or discrimination will provide a basis for their promotion.

#### *Correlates of Cultural Mediation*

*Bilingualism.* Language is a vehicle through which culture is communicated (Fishman, 1977). Acquiring a second language is, therefore, a prime opportunity to learn about a second culture (Buttjes, 1990). In fact, Brown (1986) argues that “second language learning is often second culture learning” (p. 33). As discussed, cultural mediation abilities develop through competence in more than one culture (Alred & Byram, 2002). Bilingualism is critical to developing this competence and would, therefore, be an important correlate of cultural mediation behaviours.

*Ethnic identity.* Ethnic identity is conceived of as the ethnic component of social identity (Phinney & Ong, 2007). The Social Identity Theory literature defines social identity as “that part of an individual’s self-concept which derives from [one’s] knowledge of [his or her] membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership” (Tajfel, 1981; p.255). In the context of this thesis, identity is the means through which second language learning



implicates culture learning. Research incorporating the socio-contextual model demonstrates a consistent pattern of greater identification with the second language community resulting from bilingualism (Noels & Clément, 1996; Noels, Pon & Clément, 1996; Rubinfeld, Clément, Lussier, Lebrun & Auger, 2006; Rubinfeld et al, 2007). For this reason, it is hypothesized that ethnic identity is a relevant correlate of cultural mediation. More specifically, it mediates the relationship between bilingualism and cultural mediation.

*Cultural representations.* The two previous correlates, bilingualism and identity, do offer much in the way of developing the skills and knowledge Byram (1997) identified as being critical to intercultural competence. They do not, however, fully account for the underlying impetus interculturally competent individuals may feel to act as a mediator to reduce intercultural conflict. It is hypothesized that an additional positive regard, in the form of xenophilic cultural representations, is a further necessary precursor to a willingness to demonstrate non-discriminatory behaviours.

In this context, cultural representations are mental and public representations that characterize a specific cultural group (Sperber, 1996). These representations encompass the images of, beliefs about and attitudes toward a distinct ethnic community that are created by interindividual and intergroup communication (Gohard-Radenkovic, et al, 2004). Rubinfeld et al (2006) have found that positive cultural representations are propelled from second language learning and its influence on ethnic identity. Specifically, greater competence in a second language community leads to more positive representations of the culture via a greater identification with that group. Feeling

positively about a second language community, in turn, incites a desire to reduce conflict or discrimination during interactions between the first and second language groups.

Together, bilingualism, ethnic identity and positive cultural representations are hypothesized to underlie a significant portion of cultural mediation behaviours displayed by witnesses of intercultural conflicts. Through the development of linguistic competence, a sense of identification and positive regard toward a second language community, a willingness to promote positive intercultural relations may emerge.

*Well-being.* The emergence of non-discriminatory behaviours would constitute a positive contribution to intercultural relations. However, cultural mediation would require some sort of implication of the witness in a conflict situation. This would suggest a downside of promoting non-discriminatory behaviours that could result in negative consequences for the well-being of the mediator.

#### *The Current Dissertation*

A series of four studies were conducted to investigate the relative importance of the proposed correlates of cultural mediation. The current dissertation also documents the development of an intercultural mediation measure that provides information about a witness' likelihood of intervening during intercultural conflict.

*Study One.* The first study begins the exploration of cultural mediation as a relevant correlate of second language learning and first and second language identity. Two specific goals are pursued. First, given the gap in investigations of anti-discriminatory behaviours, the development of an appropriate intercultural mediation measure and the delineation of relevant dimensions are necessary. The second goal is to explore whether an enhanced ability to understand, explain, interpret and negotiate the

dominant culture would result in an increased willingness to mediate in situations of intercultural conflict. The results of this study are informative about the link between identity and cultural mediation. However, they indicate that further development of the cultural mediation measure would be beneficial to the current investigation.

*Study Two.* The second study begins to respond to the need for further scale development by assessing the psychometric properties of the Intercultural Mediation Measure. This process assesses the quality of the measure and identifies weaknesses in view of guiding further scale development. An initial evaluation reveals a violation of the assumption of unidimensionality in two of the four scenarios. The two scenarios that did not meet the assumption lacked clear depictions of intercultural conflicts that would benefit from mediation and were, therefore, eliminated.

Differential item functioning analyses, assessing linguistic biases of the measure, identified some translation issues. In addition, in a scenario where participants would witness their in-group perpetrating discrimination, there was a general trend of higher endorsement of the mediation items among the majority English group than the minority French group. This indicates that the status of those involved in the conflict and the role of the in-group (perpetrator or victim) may influence witnesses' mediational behaviours. Item response analyses point to problematic items, specifically among the negatively-worded items.

*Study Three.* The Revised Intercultural Mediation Measure was developed to improve upon the deficiencies found with the first version of the measure. Building from the results of the first and second studies, scenarios that clearly demonstrate a discriminatory situation that vary in their representation of the in-group as the perpetrator

or victim of a conflict were developed. This also includes the revision or addition of new items.

Following the above revisions, the main aims of this study are twofold. First, in response to inconsistent findings between studies one and two with regards to dimensionality, the first aim is to determine whether a uni- or bi-dimensional solution best describes the newly developed scenarios and items. Confirmatory factor analyses of data collected from both minority and majority group members indicate consistent evidence that a bi-dimensional solution, with separate Involved and Avoidant factors, would better describe the data than a uni-dimensional one. Second, item response analyses assessing the revised measure indicate that it does a good job of representing the underlying constructs.

*Study Four.* Using the Revised Intercultural Mediation measure, developed throughout the second and third studies, this final study explores the substantive network of intercultural mediation. Building upon the results of the earlier studies, the first goal of this study is to explore the relative importance of role (perpetrator versus victim) and status (minority versus majority). The results demonstrate that participants are more likely to use involved mediation strategies when the in-group is perpetrating a conflict but avoidant strategies when the in-group is being discriminated against. Following this, the second goal is to investigate the interrelations between identity, representations, intercultural mediation and day-to-day hassles. Path analyses demonstrated that if the promotion of non-discriminatory behaviours is to occur, it will likely stem from a member of the perpetrator's in-group who feels positively about the group being discriminating against.

Running Head: BECOMING A CULTURAL INTERMEDIARY

## Study One

Becoming a cultural intermediary:

A further social corollary of second-language learning\*

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\* This study appeared in the *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, 26, 182-203.

### Abstract

Much of the research linking language and discrimination has been concerned with first language practices. Yet, an intergroup perspective supports the possibility that prejudice may be communicated between groups not sharing the same first language. This paper seeks to explore how factors associated with the acquisition and use of a second language contribute to the development of anti-discriminatory behaviours. Data regarding these issues were collected from 209 Francophone university students attending school in a bilingual environment. Two specific goals were pursued: (1) the development of an appropriate intercultural mediation measure and (2) an examination of how factors associated with second language acquisition relate to the use of anti-discriminatory behaviours. Results obtained demarcate involvement and non-involvement dimensions of the mediation measure. Further, a path analysis suggested that anti-discriminatory behaviours were linked to identification with one's own ethnic group. The results are discussed within the context of current approaches to the link between language and discrimination.

### Becoming a cultural intermediary: A further social corollary of second-language learning

For nearly a century, prejudice and discrimination have been central themes in social psychology (c.f., Harding, Kutner, Proshansky & Chein, 1954). Many early conceptualizations of these phenomena focused on the personal characteristics of prejudiced individuals. Recent developments have, however, steered research and theorizing toward more group-oriented explanations (e.g., Taylor & Moghaddam, 1994; Turner & Reynolds, 2001), promoting a better understanding of the processes involved (e.g., Baldwin, 1998; Dovidio, Kawakami & Beach, 2001) and focusing on the consequences of prejudice and discrimination for its victims (e.g., Dion, Dion & Pak, 1992; Jasinskaja-Lahti, Liebkind, Jaakkola & Reuter, 2006). In dealing with these more specific issues, many researchers have referred to aspects of communication as pivotal explanatory constructs (e.g., Bourhis & Maass, 2001; Fiedler & Schmid, 2001; Hecht, Jackson, Lindsley, Strauss & Johnson, 2001; Le Couteur & Augoustinos, 2001; Reid & Ng, 1999). These contributions, although comprehensive and far reaching in their consequences, have been confined to mother tongue production in explaining prejudice. Yet, the specific intergroup perspective espoused by the above suggests that the communication of prejudice may cross language boundaries (c.f., Taylor & Wright, 2002; Wright & Tropp, 2005). This paper, therefore, seeks to explore how acquiring and using a second language (L2) may contribute to the mitigation of language-based discrimination.

#### *Social Psychology and Second Language Acquisition*

Over thirty years of research has documented the essentially social nature of learning and using a second language (e.g., Clément & Gardner, 2001; Clément, Noels & MacIntyre, in press; Gardner & Lambert, 1972). Accordingly, second language learning

motivation has been defined as a function of relations between ethnolinguistic groups. Gardner's (1985; 2000) socio-educational model of second language learning essentially holds that motivation to learn a second language rests on the individual's *attitudes toward the learning situation* and *integrativeness*, referring to positive attitudes toward a language community and toward learning its language, as well as an accompanying desire to initiate contact and possibly identify with members of the second language group. As such, positive attitudes toward the language, the learning situation and the language community, held by the L2 learner, are important predictors of the amount of effort expended in learning the new language.

The notion of *integrativeness* is also evident in Clément's socio-contextual model of motivation (Clément 1980; Clément & Gardner, 2001). Clément (1980; Clément & Kruidenier, 1985) claims that, in multicultural settings, *integrativeness* promotes positive contact with members of the other group which, in turn, prompts the development of second language confidence. The latter corresponds to a relative lack of anxiety when using the second language together with the subjective impression of being able to achieve one's goals in L2 encounters. In the past, it has been shown to be related to a variety of L2 outcomes, including L2 competence (Clément & Kruidenier, 1985), facility of oral production in the second language (Clément & Beaugregard, 1986), degree of acculturation (Clément, 1986) and willingness to initiate communication in the second language (Clément, Baker & MacIntyre, 2003). Of more immediate relevance to the present issue, however, L2 confidence has been linked to ethnic identity.

Clément and Noels (1992) and Noels and Clément (1996) first established the link between L2 confidence and identity among Francophone and Anglophone students