



**CRITICAL APPROACHES TO CULTURAL  
IDENTITIES / APPROCHES CRITIQUES  
D'IDENTITÉS CULTURELLES (ACI 2020)**

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**SUPERCOMPLEXITY IN INTERACTION: A  
SECOND TRIAL**

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# LIQUID MODERNITY

Forms of modern life may differ in quite a few respects – but what unites them all is precisely their fragility, temporariness, vulnerability and inclination to constant change. To ‘be modern’ means to modernize – compulsively, obsessively; not so much just ‘to be’, let alone to keep its identity intact, but forever ‘becoming’, avoiding completion, staying underdefined. Each new structure which replaces the previous one as soon as it is declared old-fashioned and past its use-by date is only another momentary settlement – acknowledged as temporary and ‘until further notice’.

(Bauman, 2018)

# COMPLEX SYSTEMS



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## A COMPLEX SYSTEMS APPROACH

‘Adopting a systems perspective on issues of interest in applied linguistics, rather than a piecemeal approach, made a great deal of sense to me. I had grown somewhat discouraged by common research approaches to second language acquisition (SLA) as I understood them. I found them to be reductionist, atomizing the object of concern and then studying one atom at a time, often through single treatment, pre-test-post-test designs. Controlling for other factors and overly deterministic, it sought to identify the causal factor in SLA, e.g., comprehensible input at  $i+1$  level.’  
(Larsen-Freeman, 2013)

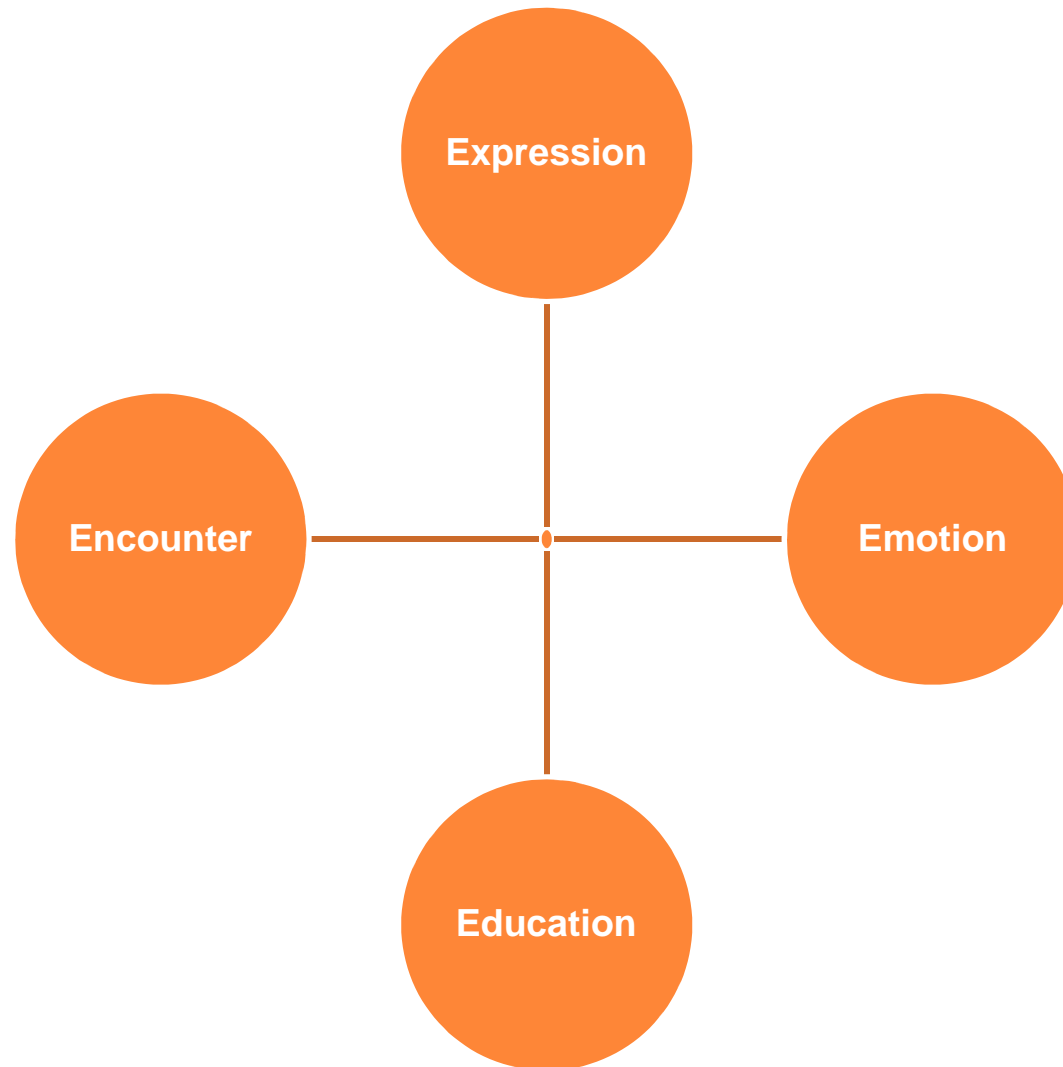
# BOUNDARIES

‘Boundaries are simultaneously a function of the activity of the system itself, and a product of the strategy of description involved. In other words, we frame the system by describing it in a certain way (for a certain reason), but we are constrained in where the frame can be drawn. The boundary of the system is therefore neither purely a function of our description, nor is it a purely natural thing. We can never be sure that we have “found” or “defined” it clearly, and therefore the closure of the system is not something that can be described objectively. An overemphasis on closure will also lead to an understanding of the system that may underplay the role of the environment. However, we can certainly not do away with the notion of a boundary’ (Cilliers, 2001, 2016).

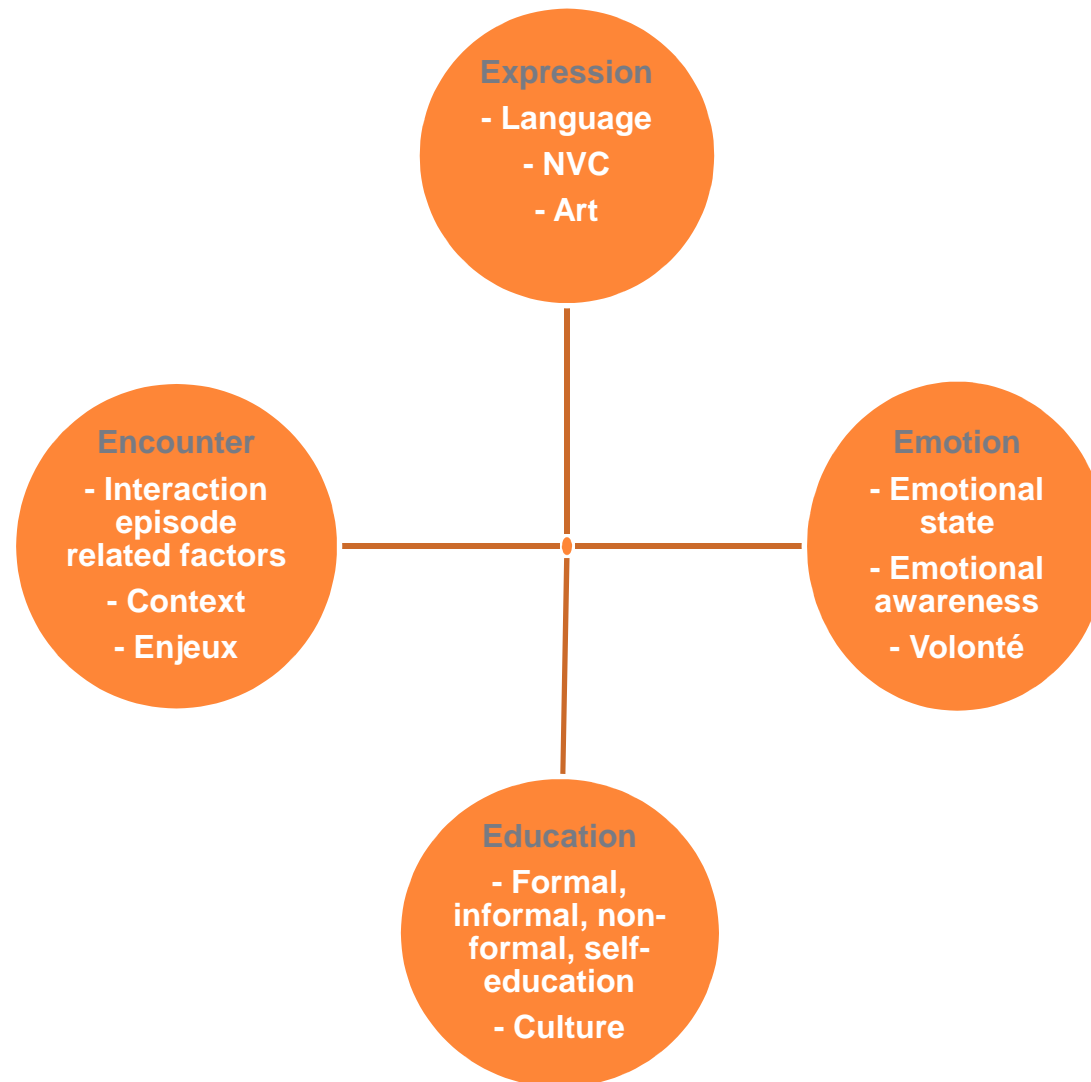
# COMPLEX ADAPTIVE SYSTEMS

‘Complex adaptive systems are often shaped by evolutionary dynamics. The mechanism of evolution starts with variation. Then there is selection of elements that are fit for the changed conditions. These elements flourish and multiply in the system. They may also change the external environment of the system, causing new variation. New variation may also come from outside the system. A new cycle of variation-selection-multiplication-variation starts. The system is never at rest. There is no movement to a knowable ‘end point’ or equilibrium. There is constant change and innovation.’ (Hoogduin, 2016)

# THE 4ES



# POPULAR COMPONENTS OF THE 4ES





# LANGUAGE

‘Language can be viewed as a complex adaptive system of interrelationships that speakers hold in their communicative environment through their linguistic actions. The advantage of assimilating language to complex adaptive systems enhances a description of the interconnections it holds with the cognitive and social environments in which it is embedded as well as an explanation of language variation at many different levels of its structural organization’, (Baicchi, 2015).

# CONTEXT

‘Context is not a backdrop of learning but very much connected to intercultural learners’ experience of, and in, place’. (Najar, 2015)

# CULTURE

- 'An integrated system of learned behavior patterns that are characteristic of the members of any given society' (Oosterwal, 1961), 'A learned set of shared perceptions about beliefs, values, norms which affect the behaviors of a relatively large group of people' (Lustig and Koester, 1999).
- 'Conventional approaches to organisational culture and change have been inadequate, partly because they have been based on outmoded models of organisational dynamics. A complexity approach can offer a new perspective, or paradigm, which leads to a radically different kind of practice for change agents.' (Seel, 2000).

## EMOTION AS A COMPLEX SYSTEM

‘Emotion regulation as a complex system in order to allow for a deeper understanding of the feedback mechanisms and interrelationships inherent across the multiple domains and time scales of emotional reaction and regulation’ (Tardif et al., 2019)

## TEACHING ABOUT COMPLEXITY

‘Familiar teaching approaches typically try to reduce complex systems into their parts so they are easier to understand. Then we tend to look for linear cause-and-effect relationships between these separate parts. Doing this is a problem because it ignores the essence of the dynamic whole that makes the system what it is. We need to find new ways to keep the wholeness, while still making the parts accessible.’  
(Kupers, Hipkins and Drake, 2015).

# RESULTS

- **Question: ‘Has your vision of interaction changed since you started this module? How?’**
- ‘I have a background of seven years of experience working in an international organisation, so more than changing my vision of how intercultural management can be, it has actually helped me understand how managers from my previous work were handling or supposed to handle a situation, for example conflict. It’s given responses to previous questions I had. Something that really called my attention was how to tolerate the ambiguity of language and I was trying to see how, who has this tolerance and who hasn’t this tolerance at work’
- **Question: ‘Have you learned anything from interacting with others? What?’**
- ‘For me I learned, what I learned is that I had stereotypes, like with, for example, French students before, like they don’t want to get along with other international students, but actually they are not, what they share in the class, also I’m quite surprising that some students they still have some like discrimination against others, which is really surprising and really shocking for me’

# RESULTS

- **Question: ‘What do you think about the ‘heartfulness’ elements of the module?’**
- ‘I really liked that part because it’s like ... for me it’s sometimes we feel it sounds logical but when you think deeply and think with another perspective, you think actually it’s not like this, I had some reflection on my own and I think wow sometimes I think of others in a stereotype way’
- **Question: ‘What do you think about interaction being explained as a supercomplex adaptive system?’**
- ‘If we are to work in an international environment we need to know how to assess these complex situations that we will face’

# RESULTS

- **Question: ‘What do you think about the fact that you haven’t been taught about interaction as being related to a country?’**
- ‘I really loved this idea because too much time people would judge me because I’m from [name of country], because I’m [nationality] so they would have certain stereotypes against me and then before I met a friend who said she would rather that she is from nowhere like these people would not have any assumptions, like fixed ideas before they know her, so I really loved this idea’
- **Question about general feedback:** on the module as a whole and the classroom environment.
- ‘I see the reaction of my classmates and it’s really different depending on the teacher. For example more permissive, some teacher could be seen as more permissive, or less demanding or less strict, and they, we would adapt our behaviour based on this. In this classroom it was more permissive. In future I think I will be more open-minded after this class, not only taking into account what I see from a person, but also the background they come from, not only the nationality, ... I would have more interest in what they have to tell me about themselves than what I could imagine they are’



THANKS FOR YOUR ATTENTION!  
ANY QUESTIONS?

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