跨文化沟通
——理论与研究回顾

INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION
——A REVIEW OF THEORY AND RESEARCH

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Foreword

    Building effective relationships, team conflict, culture shock and unrealistic expectations, these things can and do happen in today's highly interdependent world. Individuals, organizations, and nations can no longer live alone. We now live in a global age when all the inhabitants of the earth are interconnected. It is thrilling experience as well as a great challenge for us to understand people whose cultural background, identities, perceptions of the world, and verbal and nonverbal messages are different from our own. Instead of letting challenges like these short-circuit your study, travel, work or other parts of life, this book wants to make a great attempt to offer rich theoretical knowledge, various cases and measurements, and useful skills as well as instructive research methods related to intercultural communication. It is well recognized that communicating is a need in today's business world; if professionals are not able to express their ideas appropriately, it will be difficult for them to reach positive agreements while operating internationally. For the purpose of facilitating intercultural business communication, the book focuses most cases on business world.

    The first cross-cultural studies were carried out by 19th-century anthroplogists such as Avner Ben-Zaken who has argued that cross-cultural exchanges take place at a cultural hazy locus where the margins of one culture overlap the other, creating a "mutually-embraced zone" where exchanges take place on mundane ways. From such a stimulating zone, ideas, styles, instruments and practices move onward to the cultural centers, stimulating them to renew and update cultural notions. One of the major goals in studying intercultural communication is to prepare yourselves for participation in a globalizing culture, but also one with more and more cultural diversity. In the book for people interested in the topic, there are three chapters. Chapter One introduces concepts, metaphors, history and content of intercultural communication research.

Chapter Two reviews eight influential scholars and theories concerning intercultural communication. Chapter Three outlines four main cultural clusters.

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Shan Xiaohui

China Women's University

June 2015

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Culture and Intercultural Communication Research

The study of intercultural issues is by no means a new area. People have interacted with others from different cultures throughout our history in wars, religious journeys and exchange of goods. They have also been well aware of the difficulties these encounters may cause. Even though the history of intercultural contact is long, it has never before reached the magnitude of today's world. Earlier it was only people in certain professions or status that had the contact to the foreign cultures. Nowadays even the most isolated and marginal groups of people have the opportunity to interact with people all over the world. Intercultural interaction has become a reality of everyday life for almost everyone. The growth of interdependence of people and cultures in the global society of the twenty-first century has forced us to pay even more attention to intercultural issues.

There are several reasons for the development of the world into a global village of today. The development of technology has enabled a constant flow of information and ideas across boundaries. Communication is faster and more available than ever. Also the development of transportation has increased face-to-face contact with people from different cultural backgrounds immensely. These developments, in turn, have affected the world economy. The business world is becoming more international and interrelated and international economies face a true interdependence. Widespread population migrations have changed the demographics of several nations and new

intercultural identities and communities have been born. Cultural diversity and multiculturalism are the realities of working and domestic life everywhere. In the process of migration and general internationalisation the idea of a national identity has changed. International alliances and subcultures inside the nations have caused a de-emphasis on the nation-state.

1. 1   Concepts of Culture and Intercultural Communication

Communication

The term communication can be defined in many ways. Myron W. Lustig and Jolene Koester (1996:29) defined communication as "a symbolic process in which people create shared meanings". A symbol in this definition refers to a word, action or object that represents a meaning. Meaning, then, is a perception, thought or feeling experienced and communicated by a person. Meaning can be a personal experience which cannot be shared with others as such but needs to be interpreted as a message. A message, in turn, is a set of symbols used to create shared meanings. (Lustig and Koester, 1996:29) For example, the words in this text are symbols that form the message that is communicated. Symbolical interpretations are often attached to certain behaviour. For example, blushing can be interpreted as a feeling of embarrassment, at least in some cultures.

In communication, everything is based on an interpretive processing. Communication is not always intentional. In fact we send messages unconsciously all the time. Still people around us interpret and give meaning to these symbolic behaviours of ours. For example, we may not give the choice of clothes for a normal day much thought but people who meet us that particular day might interpret our outfit as a clear message of our personality. There are no guarantees that two people will interpret the same message in the same way. It is quite the opposite. This is especially true for intercultural encounters.

Communication is a dynamic process. It changes, moves and develops all the time. All the communication situations are unique in nature and the process can be seen as "a sequence of distinct but interrelated steps". (Lustig and Koester, 1996:30) Finally, communication involves shared meanings. This means that as people experience

the world and everyday activities, they create and share meanings with other people and groups. Communication is interpretive in nature and people actively attempt to understand and organize their experiences in the world.

According to Larry A. Samovar and Richard E. Porter (8: 1991) communication is " a dynamic transactional behavior-affecting process in which people behave intentionally in order to induce or elicit a particular response from another person ". In addition to the previous definition, they add the proponents of a channel, through which the communication takes place; *a responder*, who observes the communicative behaviour; *encoding* and *decoding*, i.e. the processes of producing and interpreting information; and feedback, which refers to the information available to a source that permits him or her to make qualitative judgements about communication effectiveness. As Samovar and Porter put it " communication is complete only when the intended behavior is observed by the intended receiver and that person responds to and is affected by the behavior". Thus their definition is largely based on intentional communication. This is only to show that there are several ways to define and understand communication.

Intercultural Communication

Intercultural communication refers to the communication between people from different cultures. According to Samovar and Porter (10 : 1991) intercultural communication occurs whenever a message is produced by a member of one culture for consumption by a member of another culture, a message must be understood. Because of cultural differences in these kinds of contacts, the potential for misunderstanding and disagreement is great. To reduce this risk, it is important to study intercultural communication.

The relationship between culture and language has been studied for many decades, but scholars from different disciplines still have not reached consensus on the degree to which culture and language are related to each other. The first argument is that language determines our culture. This approach comes from the " Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis" which claims that language not only transmits but also shapes our thinking, beliefs, and attitudes. In other words, language is a guide to culture. Other scholars argue that language merely reflects, rather than shapes, our thinking, beliefs, and attitudes. Despite these differences in approaches, all scholars still agree

that a close relationship exists between language and culture.

The first intercultural analyses done in the West, were by anthropologists like Edward Burnett Tylor and Lewis H. Morgan in the 19th century. Anthropology and Social Anthropology have come a long way since the belief in a gradual climb from stages of lower savagery to civilization, epitomized by Victorian England. Nowadays the concept of "culture" is in part a reaction against such earlier Western concepts and anthropologists argue that culture is "human nature", and that all people have a capacity to classify experiences, encode classifications symbolically and communicate such abstractions to others.

Typically anthropologists and social scientists tend to study people and human behaviour among exotic tribes and cultures living in far off places rather than do field work among white-collared literate adults in modern cities. Advances in communication and technology and socio-political changes started transforming the modern workplace yet there were no guidelines based on research to help people interact with other people from other cultures. To address this gap arose the discipline of intercultural analysis or intercultural communication. The main theories of intercultural communication draw from the fields of anthropology, sociology, communication and psychology and are based on value differences among cultures. Edward T. Hall, Geert Hofstede, Fons Trompenaars, Shalom Schwartz and Clifford Geertz are some of the major contributors in this field.

Verbal Communication (VC)

Language is one of the most important differences between many cultures, and one of the greatest barriers. Differences in language make intercultural interactions difficult. Even if a person is fluent in a language, severe mistakes can still occur. Linguistic conventions may cause significant misunderstandings related, for instance, to speech acts, interaction management, lexicon and politeness forms. As Argyle says (34: 1991) visitors to another culture should be aware of the impression they are creating by the speech style which they use. A person can indicate a positive or negative attitude to another by shifting towards a more similar or less similar speech style as the respondent, using e.g. a different accent or dialect. This can happen unconsciously.

Argyle (34: 1991) further explains how most cultures have a number of forms of polite usage of language, which can be misleading. For instance, Americans ask

questions which are in fact orders or requests (Would you like to...?) . In all the cultures there are special features of language, certain words or types of conversation, which are considered appropriate for certain situations, e.g. introducing people to one another or asking someone for a favour. There are differences in the amount of directness/indirectness one chooses and in the structure of conversations. The usual question-answer speech sequence is not used in all cultures and, for example, negations (the word "no") are not used in some Asian countries. In any case, language fluency is a necessary condition in order to make intercultural communication function.

Nonverbal Communication (*NVC*)

In addition to verbal language there are great differences in cultural norms and practices of nonverbal behaviour. Nonverbal communication refers to all intentional and unintentional stimuli between communicating parties, other than spoken word. These nonverbal processes are sometimes accounted for as much as 70% of the communication. Successful interaction in intercultural settings requires not only the understanding of verbal messages but of nonverbal messages as well. Characteristic to nonverbal communication is that it is less systematized than verbal communication; it is culture-bound and ambiguous.

Nonverbal communication can be divided to four categories: kinesics, proxemics, paralanguage and chronemics. Kinesics refers to the body movements in communication. It has also been called body language. The four most common body activities are facial expressions, eye contact, hand gestures, and touch. Severe misunderstandings can occur if one does not know the rules of, for example, touching others or level of eye contact in another culture. Proxemics refers to the study of how we use space in communication process. This space can mean anything from architecture and furniture to the distance between interactants in communication situations. Paralanguage comprises of all the sounds we produce with our voices that are not words. These include for instance laughter, tone and pace of voice and "empty" words such as um, uh or You know. Chronemics is the study of how we use time in communication. Hall's time orientations (monochronic and polychronic) belong to this category, as well as our understanding of present, past and future.

1. 2   Metaphors for Culture

Culture, understood as the accumulation of shared meanings, rituals, norms and traditions among members of an organisation or society, is the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes members of one group or society from those of another. Therefore culture is not a phenomenon in its own right. Trying to define "Culture" has certainly produced a torrent of words over the years. We can better approximate the complex, ill-defined nature of this large concept by working with *metaphors* that explore the dimensions of the proverbial elephant from several directions. Here are a few of the metaphors that have made their way into popular usage in the field of intercultural communication.

Dolls and Exotic Natives

The stock metaphor for culture in popular culture is pictures (usually of women) or of dolls dressed in festive native costume. Think of Disney's "It's a small world after all" or the decades of National Geographic covers. When we speak of "the Germans" or the "Russians" we call up these visual metaphors which equate culture with national identity, and imply that culture is relatively uniform and unchanging. These photos and dolls simplify and essentialize the "Other". They are usually cute, young, timeless, and unthreatening. (Notice that the National Geographic cover shown here plays with its old reputation by placing a mother/ daughter photo on the cover that startles the viewer with changes and contradictions in culture and identity.)

Force Fields

Schein uses this metaphor from his mentor Lewin from the heady days of Physics in mid-century. Social energy is generated by "movement through context". Force fields are not directly visible but are unifying and powerful. The metaphor implies that culture is beyond individual control or individual characteristics, a system that is dynamic, with actions and reactions, yet mysteriously orderly.

A related metaphor from Schein and Lewin is "unfreezing", which happens when cultural difference challenges the ego (the magnetic forces shift). Eventually

the organization or personality realigns and "refreezes" into new patterns.

Culture Shock

Oberg popularizes this medical/psychological metaphor for the difficulties of adapting to an unfamiliar culture (innoculation achieved through intercultural training...) .

Around the Campfire: Recounting tribal heroic myths

Deal & Kennedy's landmark Corporate Culture brings classic anthropology terms such as ritual, clan, and tribe into business. (Joseph Campbell and Robert Bly are bringing mythology and drumming to a larger audience during the same period.) The metaphor implies that culture is "primitive", powerful, timeless, and that a strong head man can reshape it.

Compass or X-mark: Your Are Here

F. Kluckhohn, Hofstede, Trompenaars, and many followers: measuring value orientation of cultures along a continuum. The metaphor is geographic—it locates cultures on a two-dimensional line—and scientific, in that it measures data and produces a numeric, presumably reproduceable, location for each given culture. The metaphor is useful because it is easy to grasp, does not value one orientation over another, outlines key differences in culture that affect business, and eases anxieties by giving people the satisfaction of knowing how they measure up, where cultures are situated.

Jelly Beans

Roosevelt Thomas: All jelly beans in the organizational jar are "diverse" not just the red ones or purple ones. Thomas also gives us Organizational Culture as a giant tree, and Culture as a house—an elephant can invite friend giraffe to live together, but the giraffe will not be able to stay long in the elephant's low ceilinged house.

Melting Pots & Salad Bowls Melting

Popular metaphors for the relationship of immigrant cultures within a larger nation or dominant culture have shifted from the melting pot to the salad bowl. In the

latter, immigrant cultures maintain their original integrity in the new national salad. More cynical observers may note that whether it is stew or salad, it all gets eaten and assimilated in the end.

Mind Maps

Two maps here—the geographic one represents the internal maps people have of their cultural terrain, knowing that "the map is NOT the territory" that reality is always vastly more complex than our mental renderings of it. The other is a mind-map, which depicts the network of associative links in our minds—knowledge triggered by a single word, for example, or the feelings and meanings we associate with a particular behavior. These associations are partly personal, partly collective. Culture in this metaphor is the map of a group's shared meanings and connections.

Celebration

Celebration of diversity, multiculturalism. Notice the metaphor and what it unintentionally communicates: we celebrate holidays, occasions, "special" events. This subtly implies that multiculturalism is decorative, fun, but special, not for ordinary "real" days or for "real" work.

Organism

This biological metaphor sees culture as living, organic, in motion. There are boundaries between internal and external; the organism (and culture) survive by controlling that boundary—allowing nutrients and waste to pass the boundaries, but keeping out foreign intrusions. Within a culture there will be different functions and roles, yet there is a common beingness.

Chaos

Culture is too complex to "manage", should be looked at with awe. One can strive to understand main loops of cause and effect, but realize that you are only capturing a simple version of the mathematically chaotic whole, and that one cannot predict all the effects your actions will create throughout the system.

Software of the Mind

Hofstede's book of that title uses the primary metaphor of the decade as the boundary between what is human and what is machine is increasingly hard to maintain: the brain as the computer's CPU (= nature, hardwiring) and the mind's culture/knowledge as software. Software is based on algorithms—recipes of sorts— designed by humans for human purposes, then edited and elaborated by future users and programmers.

Ecosystem: Interdependence, Change

Ecosystems and cultures are always dynamic, and contain a vast network of interdependent elements. Press one spot and the movement is felt throughout the system; the system presses back. Cause and effect are often too complex to map out, much less deliberately influence.

◇ Diverse elements: Many different animals and plants exist within an ecosystem = culture comprises diverse peoples, elements, subcultures. Members of a culture are not uniform; they may not even be similar to each other.

◇ System: Individual plants or animals do not have their own ecosystem = people do not have individual culture; they are unique beings embedded in a larger reality.

◇ Climate and environment: Influence what can thrive there = people are generally adapted to their own culture's "climate" and may have difficulty transplanting to another environment or ecosystem. One cannot grow an oak tree or raise tropical fish in the desert without constant care.

◇ Native and outsiders: New species to the new ecosystem will either die away, adapt, or invade and crowd out "native" species. "Outsiders" to a culture may not last long, may adapt, or may take over – those risks can make both sides nervous.

◇ Dependence and contribution: Plants and animals that depend on a particular ecosystem for survival, also contribute essential ingredients to their environment. A tree's roots draw nutrients from the soil and water, but then contribute fallen leaves for next year's soil. In this way, culture helps people survive and determines what kind of human beings they will become; yet each person also actively recreates and contributes to the content of the culture. Thus ecosystems and cultures are always in motion, never the same, yet have continuity over time.

Every metaphor has its uses and limits. Note that the ecosystem metaphor

implies that culture is "natural" instead of human-constructed. That in turn leads to the anti-diversity argument, "Hey we can't afford the water to keep that oak tree moist, let's get another olive tree that's just like us. " "Our system is in balance now, new elements might destabilize our organization. " The culture or climate is taken as a given, the outsider is an invasive species or someone who had better adapt or they won't survive.

Culture as a Toolbox

Every situation, every person is different. For culture to endure, it must be flexible enough to accommodate many different circumstances. One useful metaphor for culture is the toolbox – one that comes with a stack of reference manuals. Instead of saying "in this culture we make tables THAT way, we raise children or cook a meal THIS way", we acknowledge that culture gives us a set of tools for the task, along with a guide book that suggests how we might use those tools and what the results should look like. Cultural "tools" for making dinner would include heat source and cooking vessels, knowledge of food stuffs, recipes, knives, rules for what items are served at which time of day to which kinds of guests.

The Onion Model

There are many ways to visualise the concept of culture, but one of the most popular models is based on an onion. The Onion Model of Culture shows how culture has a number of layers. There are a number of interpretations of this model but the simplest one consists of four key layers. Therefore, careful analysis and a better understanding of the different layers as well as how they interact and influence each other is necessary. Intercultural training can help to understand the different layers of culture and their significance.

The outer layers represent cultural artefacts, products or symbols as well as patterns of behaviour such as flags, architecture or traditional clothing. Heroes make up the next layer, such as Winston Churchill in the U.K., and tend to represent many of the culture's values and beliefs.

The next layer encompasses the beliefs, norms, common rituals, traditions and attitudes of that culture. The middle of the onion represents the underlying cultural assumptions and values. This could include how people greet each other, eat

meals, get married or practise their religion.

In the most hidden of the onion are the underlying values and cultural assumptions which influence all of the other layers. These beliefs, norms and attitudes are much harder to recognise without a deeper analysis and thorough understanding of each of these layers and how they interact, but all of the other layers are built upon the centre of the culture onion.

Culture as Set of Options

More broadly, one can think of culture in mathematical terms as a set (albeit with fuzzy boundaries) that contains accepted options, tools, and reference books. If you have a friend over to dinner, you have a number of culturally appropriate choices – you can order out for pizza, cook them a gourmet meal, take them to a restaurant, have a barbeque.

Other options are possible but less likely in the U.S. these days, such as killing and plucking a chicken in their honor; these exist at the margin of the cultural set – on their way in or out. The red dots represent yet other potential responses which lie "beyond the pale" and would not even be considered, such as roast dog, or sending the guest to the neighbors to beg food because you don't have enough.

This way of conceptualizing culture helps account for the many differences within a culture. Context, personality, and subcultures will affect which options people perceive and carry out, while still maintaining group boundaries about what is normal and acceptable. This metaphor also helps explain why culture endures, because options that prove satisfactory will continue to be selected and reinforced by a variety of people in many contexts over time. "Sets of options" also gives intercultural trainers a way of talking about cultural patterns that avoids the simplistic "THE Chinese do it THIS way" stereotype while still giving foreigners guidance about typical or workable options.

When cultures interact, they will find that some of their options, tools, references will overlap. Some will remain distinctly of one culture or the other. The yellow culture may incorporate red dots that the blue culture considers taboo. Yet culture change occurs when the blue folks see a green dot over there in yellow land, and think "hmm, we never thought of THAT, let's try it". Or in a nastier situation,