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Турчина Т.В.

(Українська академія банківської справи)

## LANGUAGE AND INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

The actuality of the problem: working and living in an intercultural environment is becoming increasingly common. Different approaches to areas such management, communication, time, meetings, conflict resolution and the sharing information are all culturally relative. When we can truly accept cultural difference we no longer judge different behavior patterns as better as or worse than our own, but realize that differences are inherent feature of our complex world.

The purpose: theoretical basis of the intercultural communication forming by means of the foreign language.

Tasks: to analyze communication processes and problems, especially of misunderstandings occurring in actual, ongoing, interpersonal interaction; to develop intercultural skills.

The object: the development of communication strategies.

Are you a good businessperson? Can you manage the stressful situations that often take part in international trade? How would you deal with Japanese customers? How would you behave when invited to dinner by a Chinese customer? Is there any kind of basic "international business behavior"? Would you be able to work for a German company? What about the American way of dealing with the working force? Any businessperson should have an answer for each one of these questions. Daily practice often shows professionals that working abroad or in an international setting is harder than expected beforehand and that academic contents do not seem basic in some specific situations.

Conversational strategies vary significantly from culture to culture and from context to context. In intercultural interaction to such differences in conversational patterns can have dire consequences for participants. The participants tend to be seen in attitudinal terms; that is, unfriendly, impertinent, rude and uncooperative.

People with intercultural or life experiences pass through their perceptual changes over time. People who have expanded their views through intercultural or life experiences have developed their emphatic ability and tried to interpret incidents from other person's perspective.

The process of making meaning is a joint accomplishment between speaker and listener, and therefore, it is important for teachers in classroom situations to teach students conversational strategies as different repertoires of communication, rather than one right strategy. Becoming aware of each other's differing views makes it possible to acquire the right timing, amount of information and words in each situation in order to live up to the other person's expectation.

Besides the above cultural differences, individual differences in empathic ability were identified. Empathy is the ability to put yourself into another person's shoes. Textbooks on communication generally state that empathic ability is important in communication. In reality

however, empathy does not transcend the limits imposed by culture and knowledge and has no magic power to overcome differences in personality and background. People are unable to perceive many things until they have actually experienced them. Some people seemed to have an innate understanding of or appreciation for characteristics generally associated with the other culture.

In recent years, studies have proposed the use of intercultural communication to promote understanding among students across geographic distances and foster students' global awareness and international experience. Computer-mediated communication technology has enhanced the ability to connect people from anywhere in the world by facilitating of ideas and information across distances. The development has provided new opportunities to improve learning about and from others who share similar interests, but who have different cultures and life experiences. Teachers and students are enthusiastic about the benefits of learning with partners beyond traditional classroom boundaries, but there are important communication issues to consider when planning distance learning with partners from different cultures. These communication issues extend beyond levels of written language proficiency and technical competence with computers. For example, researchers have noted cultural differences in patterns of communication as a significant factor in online discussion between university students in different countries. For successful partnership and learning through distance education to take place, educators must pay attention to the cultures of their students. Culture is an important consideration because cultural values and norms determine forms of communication of different groups. Teachers or trainers should take into consideration the cultures of students when designing and delivering educational technology, because these students bring culturally based rules, expectations, value systems and educational needs to the learning environment.

Language learning constitutes an important part of the student's preparation to responsible citizenship in societies that are becoming increasingly multilingual and multicultura... A natural task for language learning is to connect people from various cultural backgrounds and thus increase openness for human diversity. There is thus a new challenge for second and foreign language teachers to facilitate their students to grow beyond the boundaries of their own cultures. Such a goal also entails a clear socio-political dimension in foreign language education: promoting student autonomy and democratic citizenship education as an inherent part of language education. To do so teachers need to encourage the students' active participation and responsible action in the classroom community. They also need to enhance their students' personal identities as part of a wider European identity.

Foreign language education involves purposefully designed and facilitated human growth that touches the student as a whole person. It aims at meaningful learning that is based on personal experience. Foreign language education promotes self-directed learning and socially responsible student autonomy. By this it means the student's willingness and ability to take increasing charge of the decisions concerning his or her learning. In terms of the conception of man, the student is seen as a self-directed, intentional person who can be guided to develop his or her competences in three inter-related areas of knowledge, skills and awareness: personal awareness and self-direction, awareness of learning process and awareness of language and communication.

Personal awareness and self-direction develop in learning processes throughout the individual's life cycle. Self-directed language learning poses demands on the student's ability to cope with unknown situations. Acceptance of ambiguity is particularly necessary in foreign language learning which is bound to involve unpredictability and novelty because of the new linguistic and cultural systems of language behavior. Students with high self-esteem are generally more willing to take risks in communication. Fostering self-esteem is a question of working towards a community of learners in which the students feel safe to explore their language learning, communication and cultural meanings. Cognitive factors are thus integrated with the affective elements in language teaching and language use.

Awareness of the learning processes helps language students to monitor their learning towards increasingly self-organized negotiated language learning and self-assessment. This involves knowledge about the strategies of language learning and communication. At a higher level of abstraction, the metacognitive knowledge of learning helps students to improve their ways of planning, monitoring and assessing their learning processes. It also means acquiring the social skills needed in responsible learning.

Language classrooms provide a powerful environment for fostering and guiding student learning. They allow language, communication and learning to be made explicit and discussed and explored together, with the teacher as a professional guide and organizer of the learning tasks and opportunities. The quality of his environment is a question of what kind of tasks the students do and how they are guided to work on what they do. Awareness of the language as a linguistic system also includes learning the meta-knowledge of language at the various levels of linguistic description. Through such knowledge students can become more skilled language learners and users who are also capable of assessing their language proficiency. They need to understand their foreign language learning enterprise and conceptualize their role as active participants in the process.

People are able and want to do more than only express themselves with logical rationality. In what they do, they pursue an end, as is normal for living beings. If one cannot distinguish logical and teleological rationality, the literal meaning of a sentence and the goal pursued with it, many utterances will seem to be irrational. If only the meaning of the individual words and their syntax is taken into consideration, simple untruths are stated with double negations. At the beginning of the pragmatic turn in linguistics, one communication rule was "Be short!". But there is an unwritten rule of politeness intuitively adhered to all over the world which has it that "the longer (an address or greeting is), the more polite".

Before meaningless, unnatural, non-human or immature behavior and corresponding values are attributed to people of another culture, it is better to begin by doubting the adequacy of one's own judgment and knowledge. It is good to be realistic, but one aspect of realism is that the boundary between what one indulgently forgives and what one condemns should not be drawn precisely between one's own and the foreign culture. Not only others, we too tend to behave in the same way under the same conditions. If one encounters something in a foreign culture which one is completely unwilling to accept without contradiction, it is not unlikely that one will find comparable, if not worse occurrences in one's own culture, historical and contemporary. We do not need to go back to the Middle Ages in Europe, back before the Enlightenment, which people in Europe like to cite to explain what distinguishes Western from other cultures. We also do not need to retire to rural areas, to an interior that has remained economically backward; we can remain in the centre of the European modern era. The seminal Common European Framework discusses the new goal orientation in terms of fostering the language user's plurilingualism and pluriculturalism in linguistically and culturally diverse Europe. The notion involves a complex, multiple language competence on which the language user may draw in intercultural communication.

Kant's practical imperative is well known: "Act so that you always treat humanity both in your own person and in everyone else's person as an end, never as a mere means". Nonetheless, there is not much written about his view that one expresses the idea one has of humanity in the manner in which one treats oneself and others. It is possible to avoid misjudgments and tactlessness by never treating members of another culture as objects of research, or as means of research, but as research partners of equal right. They are persons. They have the right to be heard and to ask counter-questions before a judgment about them is published. A mutual exchange of opinions on an equal basis will promote the discovery of truth. A comprehensive judgment of persons involves the view from within and from without, self-image and the other's view. Hence, cultural studies are ideally conducted in tandem or in teamwork, with members of another culture together with members of the culture being studied. Method, result and interpretation must always

also be published in the language of the culture being studied, must be open to discussion and offered for review.

It is instructive when two interlocutors try to outdo each other with self-abasement, especially when it is not much self-criticism referring to them but rather compromising remarks about their own countries. It may be a good sign that this has become possible between representatives of different cultures. The strangest form of self-misunderstanding to which an encounter with a foreign culture that is held to be scientifically and technologically superior can lead is self-exoticization. It can appear both in the form of self-denigration and in the form of self-glorification. In the first case, the unfavorable foreign judgment is adopted, and salvation is sought in adopting the other culture, its language, clothing, etiquette, style of life, values. Not only are one's own traditions, all other cultures which do not subscribe to the goal culture objects of contempt. In the second case the enraptured foreign judgment is internalized. Instead of rediscovering one's own culture with its strength and weaknesses by means of the challenge presented by the other culture, one begins to perceive it and to represent it in one's own literature and art in the manner corresponding to the consciously or unconsciously perceived longings and reveries of the strangers.

Studies just focused a spotlight on the practical relevance of this area of investigation. Specifically with regard to the task of teaching a practically applicable level of intercultural competence the description of the cultural specificity of forms of communication in professional and institutional contexts is an urgent requirement. As in spoken face-to-face interaction, specific cultural patterns can also be identified in written communication. Such patterns are often a reflection of more general cultural principles of discourse organization and of the style of argument. They are sometimes expressed as a culturally-cognitively based deep structure that can be described in opposition to linearity, digression and circularity. Until now, comparative investigations of the conventions of text formation have given priority to academic/scientific language, to business communication, to letter-writing style and not least to the style of argumentative essay writing, which may have a decisive effect on the career of non-native speaker studying at a foreign institute of education.

Beyond the differences brought into the interaction which have just been described, problems of an original type, which are quite independent of the languages and cultures of the interaction partners, can develop from the dynamics of intercultural, interactional situations — and even solutions to such problems. These are the subject of recent interactionistic approaches which investigate real, ongoing, intercultural interactions with the methods of interactional sociolinguistics or the ethno-methodological conversation analysis.

When it comes to explaining the problems of intercultural communication, contrastive approaches therefore frequently prove inadequate. It is only on the basis of interaction analyses that one is able to assess what is really intercultural and problematical in situations of intercultural contact. There is still a great need for action in this area – if only to clarify the question as to what extent communication problems, which are recognizable as genuine linguistic problems, can be traced back to cultural differences in communicative style or to learner-language causes.

As in the case of explanation of actual interaction problems, specific communicative phenomena of intercultural contact situations can themselves only be approached in the framework of empirical interaction analyses. This includes the problem of language choice, for example. The question of which language or languages the communication will take place in influence the course of the interaction in a decisive manner. It has to be decided at the beginning of a verbal interaction and it can be repeatedly renegotiated during its course. It makes a big difference to the participants if they communicate in their native language or in a more or less developed learner language. And even in the last case, in which no one can have the advantage of using their native language, differences in competence can lead to one party being placed at a disadvantage. Far-reaching questions, which research has yet to answer, and which concern the factors which determine the choice of language, are still open.

At first sight, this requirement appears less important in the application to intercultural training on the tertiary level or in further education. However, the preparation for intercultural contacts and international cooperation has been a major motive for the creation of intercultural paradigm in social-psychological communication science. In this context, numerous training methods have been and will continue to be developed - often for very special target groups and for marketing advantages of the promise of something new. In general, three approaches can be differentiated. The first is information-oriented training, which gives the participant knowledge about the target country or about the requirements of the intercultural contact situation, though in a methodical, rather conventional way. The second is self-discovery orientated training, of which a major part consists of the simulation of contact situations, which the participants are exposed to new experiences which are alien to them and where they connect, step by step, to a fictive culture by hypothesis-driven exploration behavior. The third is interaction orientated training, in which the participants are brought together with partners form a target culture or put in a cooperative situation where they learn to get along with each other. Nevertheless, because the overwhelming majority of training concepts developed up to now have been designed for Americans and because, for almost all the concepts concerned, the results have not yet been evaluated, there remains a considerable need for theoretical reflections and empirically validated training approaches in respect of other source cultures.

In conclusion I would like to stress the role of intercultural communication for achieving proficiency in a foreign language. Teachers should incorporate useful findings from various culture-based approaches in order to help students build up competence. The need for our students to develop intercultural communication derives from the close relationship between culture and language. On the one hand, the material and intellectual context of human life largely conditions the way in which people mean things to each other and construct their thoughts, and consequently conditions the communicative and logical-discursive functions of linguistic codes. On the other hand, language also fulfils an accumulative-transmissive function. It expresses the cultural legacy and social experience of a people and transmits them from generation to generation. Accordingly, the bond between a language and the culture to which it refers cannot be neglected if we wish our students to understand the language fully and to use it proficiently.

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