Interculturality and Globalization

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Abstract. A society can not exist without culture. In this last one are coded the relations of human with transcendent, history, nature, society and the others. Cultures diversity has no correlation to the biological diversity of individuals, but in different social forms of ethnic groups. Geographical, sociological and historical circumstances, factors related to the intern aspect of a community and society and the particular form taken by the subject/object in the existence of the community, they are, generally speaking, the areas explaining the cultures diversification. Different cultures, therefore, reflect the different ways of manifestation of the human condition. If the cultural elements of human wouldn't have owned amazing diversity that appears in history, from the relevant diversity of natural language, the human existence would have stopped in a stationary form, would have been blocked into a single pattern of behavior, like other species. All these meanings refer to a unifying meaning, namely the mediation or, better said, intermediation. In other words, when we talk about intercultural we refer to what is between cultures. Intercultural ideology aims to help communities in their support of different cultures. Interculturality reflecting the social dynamics.

Keywords: *culture, international communication, intercultural society, social image, prejudice, tradition.*

Introduction

The term *culture*, assumed by all modern languages from Latin, means the cultivation of land, but also the cultivation of spirit. In terms of humanity, this sense of culture is growing, both in terms of outside human nature and the spiritual faculties of it that education can transform from potential into realities. We can say that the definition of culture is of English origin, Edward Burnett Taylor, being the first who saw it as a «complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, law, traditions and other products and ways of life created by the man who lives in society».[1]

Culture is the foundation of a society, is way men know worldwide, especially themselves. The diversity of cultures is rooted in different social forms of ethnic groups, in the conditioning data: the geographical, historical circumstances, individual factors of internal organization of a community / society etc. As a result, different cultures reflect different ways of manifestation of the human condition. Man is a unity in diversity, a paradoxical creature (a thinking cane that lives in the world of objectivity, trying to overcome, to reach the transcendent.

Hegel considered that «in full age of his achievements, a people, aware of itself, become an expression of individual submitting the Absolute in history. People are indeed an individual who is a world».[2]

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[1] E. B. Tylor, *Cultura primitivă* apud Pierre Bonte, Michel Izard, *Dicţionar de etnologie şi antropologie*, Editura Polirom, Iaşi 1999, p. 682

[2] Matthieu Béra ; Yvon Lamy, *Sociologia culturii*, Editura Institutul European, Iaşi, 2008, p.19

The illustrated diversity of cultural elements of history, from the diversity of natural languages (as some estimate[3] today is actually about four or five thousand languages), allowed the development of human existence, which otherwise would be stopped in a stationary form.

The Inter-particle (lat.) next to the noun culture has the following meanings: between, among, in the middle. In other words, interculturality has a role of intermediary; it surprises that something between cultures. Professor Virgil Ciomoş, stressing that something that is between (lat. inter-) may be mediating the fence located at the intersection of two households. What is the link (symbolic of course) of metaphorical meaning of the fence and interculturality? Nothing simpler: the fence may be the unifying, the meeting element between two or more cultures, but, well, he may just be the element that separates them.

In the construction of social identity interculturality moves the emphasis on differences and diversity, encouraging tolerance of a community in relation to another individual's right to accede to another cultural group, involving a process of interpenetration of cultures and building a common culture, as a desideratum, an invitation to a dialogue for sustainable development. As a result, we may conclude that interculturality reflects the social dynamics. «We can call intercultural that education which seeks the formation of persons able to appreciate different cultures living together in a multicultural society, to evolve into supporting contact with these cultures, because this diversity becomes a positive, enriching the cultural, social and economic the environment»[4].

1.   How were «seen» Romanians in time?

The mage that strangers have sketched of us in time was altered or limited by a lower or higher degree of subjectivism. Paradoxical is that even when they wanted to describe us in a positive manner, the true purpose was the opposite of the designed objective.

Heitmann proposed giving up at absolutisation of the features defining a national character, national specifics, and the basic personality, specific to each tribe.

Images depend on the social horizon of information. One can say that there is no picture itself, there is only a mental projection of a man about a particular social object, projection subject to the design characteristics of its processor. In turn, the process is subject to: age, sex, religion, organizational membership / non-membership, culture, level of education etc.

On the other hand, Slavici noted «that data only valid for some areas have been transferred to the whole nation»[5]. About our way h a lot of personalities have expressed their opinion: politicians, diplomats, writers, travelers, etc., which have been in direct contact with the Romanian population or indirectly through the study of distance culture.

2.   Social representations and images - results of opinions / attitudes, of thinking and language, personal experiences etc.

Roger Muchielli defines image as «the representation or idea which an individual or segment of a public form [...] and if the case of image is an opinion or attitude whose roots are for most irrational»[6] as a result of reception of information about a social object.

Thomas theorem «when people consider a situation as real, it becomes real in its consequences»[7], on abstract constructs, can be applied image constructs. So no picture of the real coverage, but what people think corresponds to reality orienting their attitudes and behaviors. Therefore a false image

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[3] George Steiner, *După Babel*, Editura Univers, Bucureşti, 1983, p. 80

[4] *Comité sur l' école québécoise et les communautés culturelles*, 1985, p.141

[5] Klaus Heitmann, *Imaginea românilor în spaţiul lingvistic german 1775- 1918. Un studiu imagologic,* Editura Univers, Bucureşti, 1995, p. 32

[6] Roger Muchielli, *Psychologie de la publicite et de la propagande*, Editura Librairies Techniques, Paris, 1970, p.110

[7] Ilie Bădescu, *Noologia.Cunoaşterea ordinii spirituale a lumii. Sistem de sociologie noologică*, Editura Valahia, Bucureşti, 2002, p. 25

construct, if shared by a large number of people reconfigures reality. Simultaneous image is and is not the real sphere.

«In analyzing the operation of fantasy [...] we assume that the image is carrier of not only valuable but sensitive and valuable ideation. By ideate value of the image is its capacity to provide a reference phenomenon communication messages [...]. The communication skills of a visual phenomenon has its responsibility in the capacity of human psyche to create a way determined by the coding forms visible and to transform the elements of communication»[8].

General Psychology approaches image by default, using concepts: perception, opinion, attitude, belief, faith, behavior, action. Steps taken by the social reception of the object to image formation are subject of knowledge, value assessment, comparing arguments, initial verdict value (opinion), the verdict stable value (belief), etc. « Image, according to this concept is the result of triggering processes of assessment in mental structures of individuals, aimed at obtaining views and then beliefs»[9].

As a result, influencing the individual can not be done through a transfer of beliefs or opinions, but only by stimulating, generating and triggering them with individual argument.

3.   What happens today?

The myth of a monocultural society is consistently denied by the dynamic realities of the development of political and socio-economic communities. The coexistence of different ethnic populations, communicating, working together, has the effect of producing positive mutual influences, which constitute the premises of interculturality as a basic resource of social development of all ethnic communities involved.

«Globalization can be defined as an intensification of social relations in the world, which connects remote villages in such a way that local events are shaped by events that happen at a great distance and vice versa»[10]. Globalization means for Zygmunt Bauman, the «end of geography", meaning the issue of economic restrictions and conditionality of space so far. Due to the transition, not only fast but also instantaneous information, the distances are no longer enough to rely on. Other authors speak in the same sense, of the delocation of economic activities, the companies no longer being restricted in their economic decisions-financial, by space limits, them directing their capital towards parts of the globe where their profits are the best.

«The need for the integration of Romania into the European Union should be linked to the need to achieve rapid economic growth to reach up with advanced countries, linked with the need to ensure social and political stability, starting from the overall condition of the Romanian economy at the beginning of the 3rd millennium»[11]. The process of European integration is a process of affirmation of interculturalities, so that in the European Community each national, ethnic, religious, cultural minority states its identity. Prestigious European organization, the Council of Europe was, is and will be certainly among the most active supporters of the principles of interculturality promoting the concept of intercultural society. It is a society that recognizes cultural differences, supports the development of specific identities, but encourages and intercultural dialogue, contacts, trade and cultural interference. «EU is founded on the respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, rule of law and respect human rights, including rights of persons belonging to minorities. These

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[8] Nicolae Frigioiu, *Imaginea publică a liderilor şi instituţiilor politice*, Editura comunicare. ro, 2004, p. 10

[9] Halic Alexandru-Bogdan, Chiciudean Ion, *Analiza imaginii organizaţiilor*, Editura comunicare.ro, Bucureşti, 2004, p.12

[10] A. Giddens *apud* Andrei Roth, 2002, *Modernitate şi modernizare socială*, Editura Polirom, Iaşi, p.67

[11] Cezar Avram, Gheorghe Pîrvu, Roxana Radu, Ramona Gruescu, 2007, *România şi exigenţele integrării europene*, vol. II, Editura Alma, Craiova, p.102

values are common to the Member States in a society characterized by pluralism, tolerance, justice, solidarity and non-discrimination»[12].

As regards the Romanian society, it became gradually more aware of its own cultural diversity and the number of those who believe that cultural diversity is not a negative fact, but an opportunity that properly used in the overall benefit is always growing.

The images correspond to the values compatible to culture, tradition, collective system of beliefs, social norms and contribute to training behaviors and orientation of social communications. The social images are developed through and with social relations of communication and, therefore, the dynamics of communication and social dynamic images intersecting with the outlook, and mentalities of the horizon for the interpretation of people and social groups play fundamental roles. It was observed in the context of sociological research that social actors enable an expected behavior in a social context similar to another past event of the community, they being guided at the same time by the liberties and prohibitions imposed by the beliefs, prejudices and opinions the most spread at a time in society.

«Mentality- a set of opinions, prejudices and beliefs – affects the images of individuals, human groups and peoples, first, by the prejudices and beliefs through which social information filter the view people take. Gustave Le Bon said «that opinions are based, primarily, on emotional and mystical elements, i.e. the beliefs and prejudices, and therefore depend exclusively on individual reactions that affect ceaselessly the environment, character, education, interests etc.»[13].

The conclusion must be that the notion of social image implies a direct connection with the attitude and behavior of individuals guided by beliefs and prejudices.

4.   Intercultural communication in the organizational

Jean Caune said, «communication and culture form an odd couple. None can be explained without the other. The two phenomena are not leak, do not contain nor can be located in the plan of parallel reflections through analog correspondence»[14]. Culture is not equivalent to civilization, but implies much more. The expatriate encounters, usually some form of cultural shock. He must make an effort to learn some of the rituals and symbols of the new environment, but needs support to recognize the new values of that culture, or to activate an expected behavior (appropriate) by the new community visited. Human communication is a complex system and therefore can only be understood by analyzing it in its entirety. We can notice the complexity of communication particularly in the conditions of globalization, in the expansion of multinational companies and, not least in the evolution of electronic communications services.

Dr. A.J. Schuler, in his the article *Tips for a successful intercultural communication*, identifies some general advice necessary in the actual conditions of the business environment to communicate effectively with people from countries and cultures different from ours: direct experience is the best way begin to know a culture, at first, the differences can be felt as a threat: we tend to go over common things and only to note the differences when we interact with members of other cultures.

Simcha Ronen and Oded Shenkar of the *Academy of Management Journal* conducted an analysis of groups of countries based on cultural affinity. Thus, in countries with high cultural context, such as Taiwan, South Korea, people rely less on verbal communication and a lot on nonverbal communication. A Chinese speaker will send the message indirectly, waiting for the receiver to discover the essence of the message. In such cultures the rules are seldom explicit, while in countries

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[12] *Tatatul instituind o Constituţie pentru Europa*, publicat pe site-ul oficial al Convenţiei privind viitorul Europei, 18 iulie 2003, http//european-convention.eu.int/docs/Treaty/850.RO.pdf
[13] Gustave Le Bon, *Opiniile şi credinţele*, Editura Ştiinţifică, Bucureşti, 1995, p. 84
[14] Jean Caune, *Cultură şi comunicare*, Ed. Cartea românească, Bucureşti 2000, p. 17

like USA, Germany, people rely on verbal communication. A speaker of English feels responsible for transmitting the message in a context more clearly.

People naturally tend to rely on nonverbal communication when learning a foreign language, that having support in the fact that when you have a conversation with someone, you rely often on spontaneously nonverbal clues. Nonverbal communication is as important as the word, but gestures can be a source of confusion, since people in different cultures use different gestures. This shows that gestures actually form another language, similar to spoken language or that include the words spoken and gestures. Gestures ease the thinking, no longer being needed to express everything in words. Even if you do not want it, our gestures and attitudes betray our fears, weaknesses.

Today, understanding and managing the impact of these differences are constant concerns of most international corporations. In the 80s, appeared and developed the intercultural training market for corporations, since 1990, the occupation of intercultural trainer and management trainer in diversity has matured considerably, and training services were diversified and sophisticated. Intercultural training is a preparation before leaving the host country with good information about that country, its specificity, administrative concepts and general rules.

It was found that people who had a intercultural training before departure abroad adapt better, so culture shock is less intense if they began to adapt to the new culture before leaving home. This first step is continued with direct interaction with locals of the host country. A significant issue related to the adaptability of each person to cultural host environment and interacting with it lies in the personal availability, in opening up to new experiences and accepting cultural differences. The quality of intercultural communication is based on how each understands, accepts and respects the cultural differences of others.

In planning a communication intended for an international audience each component is to be analyzed thereof to remove the barriers or any background noise that could alter the results sought to achieve. At an ideal level we expect that individuals involved in international affairs to know a lot about each type of culture that they would face, but a practical and reasonable approach is to examine some of the common elements that could affect communication in an international environment. Understanding these elements will ensure an increased efficiency of communication with people from other countries or cultures. These common factors include cultural evolution, language, religion, perception of time, human behavior and communication style.

The quality of intercultural communication is based on how each understands, accepts and respects the cultural differences of others. A multinational company is based on a solid set of values that transcend practically individual cultures of those who constitute. In this way, its employees adhere to them without relinquishing or being inconsistent with their values. Thus it was necessary to study dynamic organizational culture based on contacts with other cultures. It was found, for example, that the features of a culture can not be simply taken, it is necessary, first, an evaluation of the characteristics of organizational culture and the elimination of everything that is for unconstructive for the firm. It is needed to be taken into account the organic nature of organizational culture and that the takeover of some elements (without being adapted) can cause the impairment of cultural forms. Thus, we could see even in our country as some companies were born through a process of imitation of Western forms of organization. Practice has shown, unfortunately, that these practices are ineffective on long-term and can lead to a higher rate of business failure.

Increasingly, many countries began to agree with the U.S. slogan «time is money», because it requires time management, so emphasizing the value of this resource, which is as high as limited. For example, Americans are willing to leave off tact and diplomacy and to tolerate with high ease inappropriate behavior in discussing business, only to meet deadlines or schedules.

It should be set how the receiver will interpret the message, therefore being necessary requiring a structure of the content to ensure the obtaining of a positive response. When the communication involves the participation of people belonging to different cultures, it should be taken into consideration their different reasoning. A normal hypothesis and convenient in this situation is that, whereas all individuals are almost identical in terms of biological, all have the same needs and values, but such a view in an international environment we can ensure only failure.

5. Intercultural education –a solution for equality, respect and opening communication with the others

Researchers involved in analyzing the particularities of other cultures, recognize that the purpose of their work contains an error margin greater or less, margin which springs in the habit to refer top everything in their own culture as superior in relation to other cultures. Diversity of cultures has come to be regarded as a reality in which the human subject provides himself the status of being creative.

Contrary to the allegation of sociologists and anthropologists that values change relatively quickly, generalizing judgments with which we have been tagged for years - and more if there are negative - will remain and maintain in our relationships with strangers still long, even if those values have meanwhile changed, being dispelled by reality. Usually, we hurry to label, to define more precisely and quality defects, to classify, stating absolutely certain some aspects of culture and human behavior of a community or other of the desire to find equivalences or to measure a certain characteristic prevalent in some people and absent in others. To acquire a more adequate picture of the country and its people is needed a good knowledge of the people, by observing and his occupations and, last but not least, we should consider the methodological possibility of making comparisons and decide, by contrast, on the characteristics of a people.

Even things considered as very simple, such as using colors, numbers, or exposure of certain parts of the body should be considered in intercultural communication. Any person who communicates in an intercultural environment should be careful to all the environmental elements and thus use a mix of communication techniques to be properly understood by receivers. Regardless of the communication national, international, regional, local, etc. character, the message should be adapted according to the capacity of understanding of the receptor, so the risk of misunderstanding, decoding or undecoding is the lower.

As is known the nature of diversity of representations, references and values in the intercultural perimeter, it is necessary to distinguish ways of interaction and expression patterns of specific cultures and communities from the perspective of intercultural communication, intercultural importance function at different levels (political, educational, socio-cultural, institutional) and from the perspective of different approaches (psychological, sociological, pedagogical, educational, anthropological, etc.). and, not least to recognize the importance of the nature of linguistic competence and its transient on intercultural communication. Intercultural education is essential, primarily for the stability of any society and its prospects for sustainable development, because it presents us how to live with each other, but also because it supports equality, respect and opening communication with the others.

Bennett[15] describes the six stages of intercultural sensitivity / receptivity development. The first three stages are considered «ethnocentric» (denial, defense, and minimization) and three «ethno-relative» (acceptance, adaptation and integration).

As regards the analysis of organizations, it was necessary to study dynamic organizational culture based on contacts with other cultures. It was found, for example, that the features of a culture can not be taken simply as necessary, first, an evaluation of characteristics of organizational culture and the elimination of everything that is for unconstructive for the firm is needed It is needed to be taken into account the organic nature of organizational culture and that the takeover of some elements (without being adapted) can cause the impairment of cultural forms.

«The need of belonging to an area, a geographic economic and social space, other than the national, manifested in different intensities in different moments of social evolution. History shows that no self-development exists only in the national framework, that the introduction of a national economic space into the values, regional or global specific, even if it was in force, led ultimately to increase social security and economic empowering through this position» [16]. Technological and economic globalization is intertwined. Undoubtedly, globalization encompasses a global standardization of

[15] J. M. Bennett, 1995, *Critical incidents in an Intercultural Conflict-Resolution exercise*. In Fowler, S.M.&Munford M.G. (Eds.) Intercultural Sourcebook:Cross-Cultural Training Methods, Vol.1, Varmouth, Maine:Intercultural Press, pp. 147-149

[16] Cezar Avram, Gheorghe Pîrvu, Roxana Radu, Ramona Gruescu, 2007, *ibidem*, op.cit

lifestyles and mentalities that can be appreciated in different ways, even opposite. Globalization of the open and free society model facilitated intimate contact of different cultures.

It should be taken into account in international business, that people, even if they are similar in terms of biological systems, have different cultures and values that influence how they work, reason and behavior. Communication barriers occur when people misunderstand the sense intended in a message sent by someone from another culture. Intercultural communication goal is to reduce those differences that can cause misunderstandings, and since the messages are constructed by individuals, using words, a first issue would be to identify factors that lead to the disagreements mentioned earlier.

A practical approach and positive purpose is to examine some of the common elements that could affect communication in an international environment. Only by understanding these elements (cultural evolution, language, religion, perception of time, human behavior, and communication style) will ensure an increased efficiency of communication with people from other countries or cultures. How to communicate depends on a critical understanding of that culture, because what can be positive in one culture may be outrageous to another. All these are necessary in an era of communication. McLuhan intuited by the famous formula: «in the next millennium, the world will be a village with people» - communication is inevitable, or, as one might express Watzlawick, «non-communication is impossible».

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