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Theoretical Modelling of Intercultural Communication Process

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Abstract

The definition of the concepts of “communication”, “intercultural communication”, “model of communication” are analyzed in the article. The basic components of the communication process are singled out. The model of intercultural communication is developed. Communicative, behavioral and complex skills for optimal organization of intercultural communication, establishment of productive contact with a foreign partner to achieve mutual understanding, searching for acceptable ways of organizing interaction and cooperation for both communicants are highlighted in the article. It is noted that intercultural communication through interaction between people affects the development of different cultures’ aspects.

Keywords: communication, communicator, culture, intercultural communication, model of communication, model of intercultural communication.

Introduction

The integration tendencies caused by the effect of modern society globalization process cover all aspects of human society activities and cardinaly transform stated ideals, perceptions and views into realities of coexistence. The fundamental research issues related to intercultural interaction are becoming more urgent global development priority; thus, there is a necessity of training a multicultural personality ready for intercultural cooperation and intercultural communication. Therefore, the productive intercultural dialogue is fundamentally defined as a new education system task, also mentioned in UNESCO strategy (2014-2021). It is noted that convergence has never been so relevant as today. It is becoming increasingly necessary for social integration, mutual understanding and lasting peace.

Now, the problem of intercultural communication is represented by many Ukrainian researchers (Batsevych, 2007; Batsevych, 2004), as well as foreign scientists (Sadokhin, 2014). The results of modern scientific researches aimed at resolving main issues of intercultural communication indicated that the concept of “intercultural communication” is quite difficult, comprehensive and complicated. It was also found out that, the concept of “intercultural communication” was directly connected to the description of its basic concepts: thus culture and

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communication. Furthermore, the scientists point out the lack of general methodological fundamental principle of analysis and common conceptual approaches concerning its interpretation.

Thus, there is a need to create a model of intercultural communication for (1) highlighting main components of intercultural communication and presenting their interconnection; (2) identifying the nature of intercultural interaction, necessary communicative and behavioral skills/competencies toward effective/productive intercultural communication. Therefore, it should be underlined that, the above-mentioned components of the intercultural communication model can be exploited for understanding substantive and procedural characterization of the whole intercultural communication process. Thus, the purpose of the article is to develop a model of intercultural communication.

First of all, it is necessary to examine the concept of “communication” in general and find out its most characteristic features as the term “communication” is directly connected with the process of intercultural communication. This concept is used by many sciences such as philosophy, psychology, sociology, political science, computer science, linguistics and others.

The analysis of scientists’ views concerning the interpretation of the concept “communication” helps to explain that, in spite of the multiple approaches of its definitions, most of them are relied on the definition of “communication” as a process of exchange/transfer information (facts, ideas, views, emotions, images, attitudes) from one person to another; therefore, it can be highlighted that, communication is a process of exchange/transfer information with the help of various kinds of verbal or non-verbal signs.

Communication Process through Basic Communication Models

Only the analysis of the concept of “communication”, in our view, is not enough for understanding the essence of this process, consequently, the process of intercultural communication. Thus, it is important to study models of communication, as modeling of the communication process is a basic form of its cognition from inner side.

The model of communication is a diagram for understanding this process (Kunitsyna, 2001, p. 8). Batsevych (2007) notes that, a model of communication contains “*the representation of generalized process of communication*” (p. 115). According to Yashenkova (2010), communication model reproduces “*the main elements and functional characteristics of the communicative processes*” (p. 40). Semeniuk (2010) describe the model of communication as “*generalized theoretical concepts for presenting the structure and functions of the object*” (p. 32). It is necessary to summarize that, the model of communication is used for a substantial studying of the process of communication as it provides the reflection of simplified structure, properties and connections between elements of the communication process.

It is important to underline that the questions of communication are discussed in many sciences such as biology, psychology, sociology, philosophy, cultural studies, linguistics, technical and many others. Moreover, each of the sciences develops its model of communication (in some cases more than one) taking as a basis the most relevant particular features and mechanisms of this process. Even more, specific characteristics of each particular model are dependent on belonging of its author to a particular scientific school, his/her attitudes and interests. Therefore, speaking about the communicative model, we propose to take into account a multidisciplinary approach. It is known that the process of communication can obtain a variety of forms depending on the number of participants, objectives, channels, means and strategies of communicants.

There are a lot of communication models through the complexity of this concept in scientific literature. The most known and fundamental of them are the model of Aristotle [about 355 BC] (Jakobson, 1960; Lasswell, 1948; Shannon, & Weaver, 1980). It is important to identify the main components of above-mentioned communication models for developing our own model of intercultural communication.

So, it is a fact that the first of known models was the model proposed by Aristotle. The ancient Greek philosopher in his scientific research “Rhetoric” noted that, speech consists of three things: the speaker, the subject that is treated in the speech, and the listener to whom the speech is addressed (Aristotle, 2000, p. 14). Aristotle identified three basic elements of communication: speaker-talk-listener. These elements are reproduced in the subsequent models of communication. We can confirm that this model is universal, as it reflects the act of

communication both in oral and in written forms. The essential contribution was made by Harold Dwight Lasswell (an American Psychologist and a Political Scientist), who developed simple model of communication in his research “The Structure and Function of Communication in society. The Communication of Ideas” was also developed in 1948 (Lasswell, 1948, p. 37). The scientist noticed that, five questions must be answered in order to understand the process of communication: “*Who says what to whom in which channel with what effect?*” Thus, the answers to these five questions give an opportunity to describe the process of any communication. Moreover, each elements of the model represents an independent field of analysis of communicative interaction.

It should be noted that the model of Lasswell (1948) was improved in the work of R. Braddock. The scientist added to H. D. Lasswell’s model two other components: conditions of communication and goal of communicator (Braddock, 1958). The more advanced model of communication was Shannon-Weaver model, which moved from mathematics and cybernetics to communication, proposed by the American mathematician Warren Weaver and improved by American researcher of communication Claude E. Shannon. Shannon-Weaver model consists of five elements: information source, transmitter, channel, information receiver and ultimate goal (Shannon, & Weaver, 1980).

Jakobson’s (1960) communication model is an important model for the theoretical understanding of the communication process developed by an American linguist, literary critic. The scientist in the study of “Linguistics and poetics” presented a model of communication which consisted of six elements: recipient, sender, message, code, context and contact. Given above-mentioned models of communication, we can conclude that the main elements of the communication process are the participants of interaction – communicators (sender and receiver), who create and interpret messages, which consists of various kinds of codes/signs (verbal and nonverbal) which are encoded or decoded by communicators.

O. Semeniuk notes that “*a verbal code is a set of language means, which is used by communicators for creation and exchange of messages during verbal interaction (communication)*”, whereas “*a non-verbal code is a set of extralinguistic means (gestures, movements, vocal effects), which is used to create messages and exchange them*” (Semeniuk, 2010, p. 226, 230). We should emphasize that the process of encoding messages is “*the process of transformation of information into a message using words, intonation, voice, images, gestures, facial expressions*”, whereas the decoding process comprises “*passing the received message to a form that is understandable to the holder*” (Avramenko, 2015, p. 155, 156).

The Theoretical Model of Intercultural Communication Process

For creating our own model of intercultural communication, we examine the main interpretation of the concept of “intercultural communication” (Batsevych, 2007; Sadokhin, 2007). Generalizing interpretations, we came to the conclusion that intercultural communication should be seen as a combination of diverse forms of relationship, interaction and communication between individuals and groups belonging to different cultures. Thus, taking into account modern scientific researches, we conclude that a model of intercultural communication (Figure 1) should include such fundamental components as: the subjects of intercultural communication – communicators; interacting cultures; the processes of encoding and decoding information; the nature of the interaction between people (3); key skills (1) communicative and behavioral abilities (2) of communicants for interaction with other cultures’ representatives.

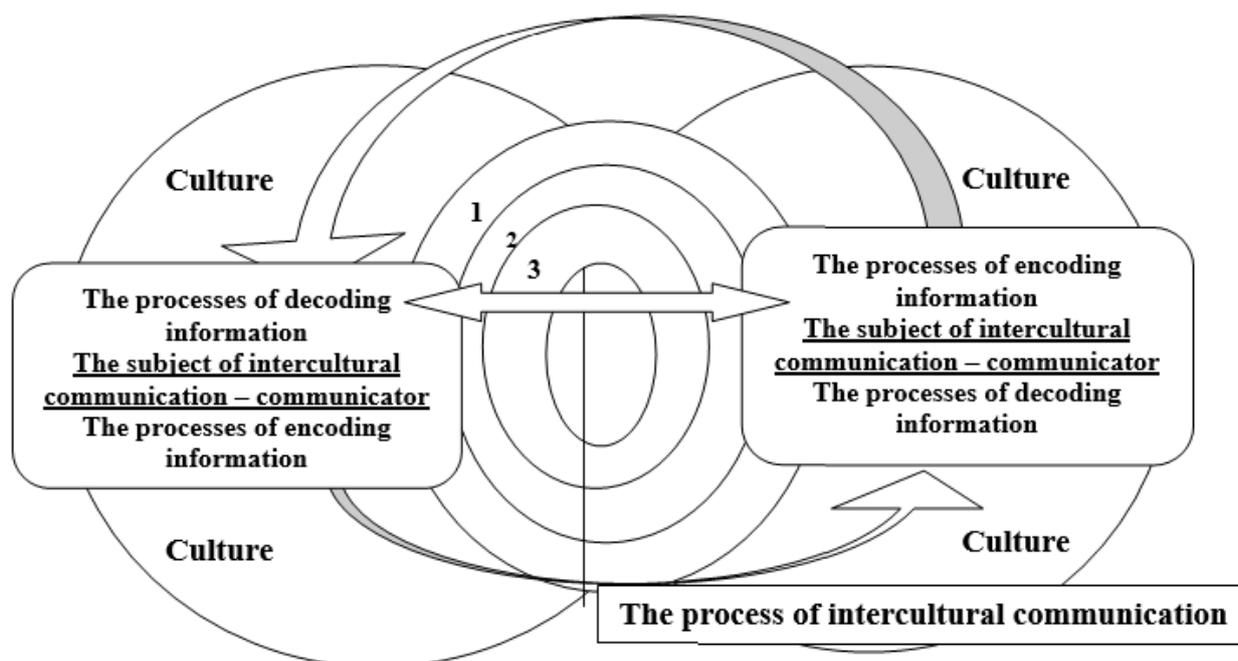


Figure 1. The model of intercultural communication

The first component of the model of intercultural communication is the subjects of intercultural communication – communicators. We should consider the concept of “communicator” in a general sense. Communicators are “*persons who are involved in the process of communication*” (Semeniuk, 2010, p. 228). According to F. Batsevych, there are such communicators as addresser [speaker, author] and addressee [listener, someone who takes the message] in the process of communication (Batsevych, 2007, p. 81). A. Sadokhin emphasizes that communicator in the process of intercultural communication is the language personality, who is regarded as a specific type of communicator possessing cultural identity, adhering to the linguistic, behavioral and communicative norms of his/her culture and capable of effective intercultural interaction (Sadokhin, 2014, p. 104).

Therefore, in the model of intercultural communication, we use the name of “communicator – the subject of intercultural communication” as a participant of intercultural communication, who has a certain skill, communicative and behavioral abilities for interaction with the partner from other culture. Based on the fact of belonging communicators entering into intercultural communication to different cultures, we should try to find out the essence of the concept “culture”, which is defined in a broad sense as “*the totality of material and spiritual values created by human community, which characterizes a certain level of society development*”, in narrow – “*the spiritual level of people’s life*” (Batsevych, 2007, p. 92).

Following A. Sadokhin, we understand the concept of “culture” as the world of material and spiritual products of human activity (artifacts), a set of norms, values, beliefs shared by members of cultural groups and communities’ interaction (Sadokhin, 2014, p. 22, 23). Thus, culture includes everything that is created by people and describes their daily life considering certain historical conditions.

The Above-mentioned understanding of the concept of “culture” allows us to fully comprehend the process of intercultural communication because it covers not only the external (objective), but also internal (subjective) side of each individual culture, determined by values, value orientations, specific ways of perception and thinking, norms of behavior and morality. It also gives us the right to say that, the process of intercultural communication takes place not only with the interaction of people, but also with cultures. We consider that the main communicative and behavioral abilities for effective intercultural communication include: tolerance, empathy, mobility of behavior, stability of personality, reflection, intercultural activity and responsibility. We propose to review in detail each selected communicative and behavioral abilities.

Thus, the interpretation of the concept of “tolerance” is associated with tolerant, intelligent attitude towards anyone or anything (Lehin, & Petrova, 1949, p. 645). P. Valitova argues that, tolerance involves the interest in others, the desire to feel his/her own feeling (Valitova, 1996, p. 34). O. Heffe notes that, the notion “tolerance” is connected with providing mutual respect for different cultures and traditions (Heffe, 1991, p. 17). According to F. Batsevych, intercultural tolerance is a “*tolerance, respect, understanding of differences in the communicative behavior of intercultural communication participants*” (Batsevych, 2007, p. 147). Therefore, we regard that, tolerance is a mutual respect. Thus, the ability to tolerate perception of other way of thinking, lifestyle, customs, traditions, beliefs, opinions, ideas, positions. Such communicative and behavioral ability is an integral part, a major one in the process of intercultural communication.

The next ability represented in our model of intercultural communication is empathy which involves understanding the emotional state of other person, the ability to understand other people’s psychological state (Gurevich, 2007). A. Sadokhin underlines that empathy is the ability to understand and share the feelings of other people (Sadokhin, 2014, p. 249). The communicative empathy is characterized as “*a complex concept which has provided the ability to understand other peoples’ feelings, emotions, used for getting effective/productive communication and the formation of a favorable atmosphere of communication*” (Batsevych, 2007, p. 324).

Sharing the views of scientists, we understand that empathy is an ability to feel the partner of communication, to empathize in the process of communicative interaction. In our view, that is an integral component of communication, including intercultural communication. The next highlighted communicative and behavioral ability is mobility of behavior. So, according to the new dictionary of Ukrainian language “mobile” means “*capable of rapid movement, changeable*” (Yaremenko, 2001, p. 209). R. Nemov mentions that, the concept of “mobility” includes such characteristics as the ability to rapid reaction and rapid change (Nemov, 2007). Thus, we understand “the mobility of behavior” as such ability, which comprises the lack of tension and anxiety in behavior, sociability, the ability to quickly find a way out of a difficult situation, the ability to easily overcome the conflicts, barriers and the ability to come to a common consensus.

The stability of personality is the next ability in our model of intercultural communication. Emotional stability is manifested in the fact that a person normally responds to emotional situation, controls his/her emotional state and reactions (Nemov, 2007, p. 450). Thus, the stability of personality can be viewed as a complex quality of personality, a synthesis of qualities and abilities providing self-development, formation of his/her own personality, which also includes tact, patience and emotional stability.

We want to underline that, the concept of “reflection” has several meanings. The first one is connected with the orientation of human consciousness to the knowledge of him/herself. The second one which is also used as a synonym for introspection involves the analysis of his/her own life experiences, feelings and actions (Lehin, & Petrova, 1949). In the aspect of intercultural communication, a person’s ability to realize his/herself in different positions is very important.

We also highlight such an ability as an intercultural activity and liability, which is recognized by researchers as “*an activity, vigor*” (Lehin, & Petrova, 1949, p. 31), and responsibility as “*person’s ability and willingness to take responsibility for his/her own life, actions*” (Nemov, 2007, p. 262). Hence, the ability of intercultural activity and responsibility can be considered as the ability that promotes the initiative in communication with foreign partners and gives possibility to adapt quickly to the new conditions of communication interaction.

According to the analysis of Ukrainian and foreign scientists’ researches (Avramenko, 2015; Batsevych, 2007; Sadokhin, 2014; Semeniuk, 2010), we can single out such key skills for effective intercultural communication as: cognitive skills (the ability to use intercultural knowledge to different situations); practical skills (the ability to carry out the basic functions of speech; the ability to successfully engage in dialogue with other cultures; ability to translate from one language to another; ability to be a mediator of cultures); orientation-evaluative skills (ability to explain behaviors in other cultures; finding the causes of intercultural misunderstandings; ability to make a contact with a foreign partner); prognostic-regulatory skills (ability to analyze cultural differences; ability to be tolerant with other person). Therefore, an important component of effective intercultural communication is the nature of the interaction between the communicators. We can underline that, the interaction between the communicators in the process of intercultural

communication must be based on cooperation, subject-to-subject interaction between participants of intercultural communication and keeping the principle of dialogue between them.

Conclusion

The above-mentioned communicative and behavioral abilities, complex of skills, which are presented in the model of intercultural communication, in our opinion should help to organize the process of intercultural communication, to establish productive contact with a foreign partner, to achieve mutual understanding, to find acceptable ways of organizing interaction and cooperation.

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