Liberation of Creativity: Navigating New Frontiers in Multidisciplinary Research.

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EDITORIAL

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15. Correcting Ethnocentrism By Acquiring Intercultural Communication Competence.

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Abstract: Intercultural communication is a field of culture coined by Hall in 1959 and nowadays is becoming an essential part of the education system because of globalization, immigration and the multicultural work environments. More training, knowledge and research in this field is essential because of the recent trends in education and other branches too. Intercultural communication is the type of communication that takes place within members of different cultures and aims to understand the cultural values, beliefs and norms of other parties. The only way to achieve successful communication with the other is only by understanding and accepting the differences between cultures. Ethnocentrism is another issue connected to intercultural communication. It is a notion that appears within cultures and one who is ethnocentric believes that their own culture is superior to other cultures and these beliefs very often lead to inaccurate judgements about other people and rely on stereotypes. However, good intercultural training focuses on avoiding stereotypes and learning how to develop intercultural awareness.

A very important model in this field is the Bennett's model also called Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity. This model implies that individuals with intercultural sensitivity tend to transform themselves from the ethnocentric stage to the ethno-relative stage. Bennett's model known as the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) consists of a continuum of six stages moving from "ethnocentrism" to "ethnorelativism" and can be a very useful model in the help of correcting ethnocentrism. This paper will reveal the secrets of correcting ethnocentrism by acquiring intercultural communication competence.

Keywords: culture, differences, intercultural communication, ethnocentrism, ethnorelativism.

Inroduction

Defining Intercultural Communication:

In today's digitalized world which is global, Intercultural communication is something that is inevitable. However, it is a complex term and must explored from different perspectives in order to define and understand it. First, it is important to explore the terms culture and communication which are in relation to intercultural communication. There are numerous definitions of culture amongst which a very interesting one is by Tylor who wrote it in 1871 stating that culture is "that complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, arts, morals, law, customs and any other capabilities and habits acquired by a human as a member of society (p.2)". It is difficult to

define culture and it is not strange that this word has also been described as one of the two or three most complicated words in English language. A very famous scholar in this field Hofstede (2001) defined it as "the collective mental programming or the software of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others" (p.9). However in his book Culture's Consequences (1980) he introduces the use of the concept of dimensions of culture: basic problems to which different national societies have over time developed different answers. National culture is what distinguishes one country from another. It is what every individual belonging to that culture is indoctrinated with. In one of his interviews, Hofstede makes the claim that the acquisition of one's national culture is an unconscious process, because we are born into a certain culture and by the age of 9 or 10 we have already acquired all of the elements, language, behaviors, values, history and organizations of that culture (October 10, 2011). This is done subconsciously, simply because that particular culture is the only culture we know and are exposed to. Consequently, one is so thoroughly imbued with all of the elements typical of their own culture that while growing up it becomes almost impossible to comprehend how anyone else's culture could be any different from theirs. The second level of culture defined by Hofstede is the culture we encounter as part of the working world i.e. organizational culture. The definition of this cultural subtype can be embedded in Hofstede's definition of national culture by simply replacing the terms group or category of people with organization, i.e.

"the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one … [organization] from others" (Hofstede, p. 9). The reason why culture is something that one should be aware of is that people need something to rely on. Everyone needs some moral and legal rules to follow and obey in order to know whether what is being done is right or wrong. Culture is what makes people feel as being part of something, and this is an inevitable desire of every human being. People want to know that they are a part of something and that there are other people who share their views, opinions and experiences. Culture and intercultural communication are inevitably connected. Culture gives essential information to communication. This brings understanding through a common background of mutual experiences, histories and geographical location. Shared experiences over the years and centuries create culture which is essential for understanding and communication. As Helen Spencer Oatey points out "the shared assumptions of a group of people help to interpret the behavior and words of those in and outside the group" (2012, p.2). She explores the interactive accepts of cross-cultural communication. Cross-cultural communication is not the same as intercultural communication. On the one hand, cross-cultural communication is not about the communication of people from different cultures but the comparison of their differences across culture. This means that cross-cultural communication is comparative in nature and deals with the communication patterns of different cultures. On the other hand, intercultural communication examines how the specific cultural

differences affect the interactions of the people involved in that communication (Gudykunst, 2002). **Intercultural Communication Concepts:** Intercultural communication competence means the ability to communicate in an effective and appropriate way with people from different cultures. In order to achieve appropriate and effective communication, one must value rules, norms of the other culture which can be fulfilled by having a more developed sense for intercultural communication. Intercultural communication cognition of English language teachers would mean the ability of teachers to incorporate intercultural communication knowledge, attitudes and awareness towards other cultures. Chen and Starosta (1999) define intercultural communication competence as "the ability to effectively and appropriately execute communication behaviors that negotiate each other's cultural identity or identities in a culturally diverse environment" (p. 28). They outline three key components of intercultural communication competence: intercultural sensitivity, intercultural awareness and intercultural adroitness defined as verbal and nonverbal skills needed to act effectively in intercultural interactions. In order to go into details of ICC, three models are to be explained in details below: *Process Model (D. Deardorff)*

D Deardorff's model of ICC is named Process Model of ICC. This model explains the process of how to become interculturally competent. This scholar has made a national study in the USA and concluded that ICC can be defined as effective and appropriate behavior and communication in intercultural situations. The main

elements needed to achieve ICC are attitudes, knowledge, skills, internal or external outcomes. If attitude means the way you feel or think about someone and one of the key attitudes are respect, openness, curiosity and discovery these are needed to move further for successful intercultural communication. Knowledge about culture and sociolinguistic awareness is also needed to achieve successful intercultural interaction. In connection to this are the skills to process the knowledge such as observation, listening, analyzing and interpreting. All these lead to the internal outcome which includes flexibility, adaptability and empathy. Finally, empathy plays an important role for achieving the wanted external outcomes i.e. do not do to others what you do not want to be done and vice versa. From here the definition of ICC is the effective and appropriate behavior and communication in intercultural situations. Furthermore, Deardorff (2006) suggests that this model is open and allows individuals to enter at any point and they can move freely between categories, sometimes moving ahead, and at other times returning to delve deeper into a concept previously encountered: This model confirms that if an individual has the needed attitudes and the minimal appropriate behavior and communication it is possible to achieve the desired outcome. When the person possesses knowledge and skills, he/she will be more effective in the intercultural interaction. This model shows that ICC is not a finalized process. One cannot become completely interculturally competent because this is a lifelong process. However, language is not the only needed skill for ICC but it is only a bridge to

move on and develop more and more skills and understand the others. b)Byram's modelcByram's model in ICC whose concept is in accordance with linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence and discourse competence and adds detailed intercultural dimension in order to move away from the native speaker model of communication. (Han & Song, 176). It also combines knowledge, skills and discovery and interaction, intercultural attitudes and critical cultural awareness into a system of intercultural competence. Thus, the role of the language is to develop skills, attitudes and awareness of values just as much as it is to develop a knowledge of a particular culture or country (Byram, 2008). According to Byram's model as shown in Figure 2 above, intercultural competence is made of knowledge, skills and attitudes and all these are supplemented by five values: intercultural attitudes, knowledge, skills of interpreting and relating, skills of discovery and interaction, critical cultural awareness (Byram, 2002). Byram gives explanation of ICC consisting of interaction with the "other" using the one's native language or interpretation of documents that have been translated into one's native language. Hence ICC is about combining the ideas of self-awareness in the process of communication in a foreign language as a needed component to the intercultural case. **_Bennet's model:_** A very important approach connected to this issue is Bennet's model of cultural competence. According to Bennet (1993), "Cultural competence is the process by which people learn to value and respond respectfully to people off all

cultures." (p. 245), and it is important to acquire intercultural communication competence which has two prerequisites:

-intercultural communication awareness

-intercultural communication sensitivity

According to the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity individuals with intercultural sensitivity tend to transform themselves from the ethnocentric stage to the ethno-relative stage. Bennett's model known as the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) consists of a continuum of six stages moving from "ethnocentrism" to "ethnorelativism." The ethnocentric stages are denial, defense, and minimization. The ethnorelative stages are acceptance, adaptation, and integration. This model is organized in six levels identifying the cognitive orientations of individuals in understanding cultural difference. Each level describes the perception of the cultural difference which is connected to the experiences of other cultures. By identifying the certain cultural difference, predictions about behavior and attitudes can be easily made and education can be organized to facilitate development along the model. The figure shows how moving from "ethnocentrism" i.e. the feeling that your individual culture is central, towards "ethnorelativism" which means that the individual's culture has experienced the context of other cultures by acceptance, adaptation and integration. The six stages will be explained in details below: *i.Denial,* This stage represents the lowest rate of openness for other cultures. In this stage the individual is not aware of the existence of the other culture and it is as a result of physical and

social isolation from such differences. This kind of a person is the ultimate ethnocentric one and as such the state of mind of this person has a limited degree of contact with different cultures (Bennet, 1986). At some point they are even not aware that the other cultures exist, and their own vision of the world is not challenged to see other cultures s they are. ***ii.Defense:*** In this stage the person perceives the different cultures as threatening by forming negative stereotypes and different types of discrimination such as race, gender as a form of denigration of a particular group of people. This phase strengthens the relationships between the members of a certain group and establish a 'boundary' between the two seemingly opposing categories Sometimes it can be about cultural superiority assuming that one's own culture is better than any other according to some evolutionary projections. Or in the ultimate stage of defense it is about feeling that "the other cultures are quite simply inferior to ours, on a continuum of which we are the apogee" (Chodzkienė, 2014) *iii.Minimalization:* The final stage of ethnocentrism is the last attempt to bury the differences and it is presumed that humans are governed by common principles that guide values and conducts in their surroundings. Minimalization suggests that individuals disregard and/or trivialize differences by burying them under the 'weight of cultural similarities' (Bennett, 1986: 183). If people are in an intercultural situation at this stage, they will deem that a simple awareness for interaction will be needed for successful communication. Somehow this is still an ethnocentric view because for these individuals, differences are just some variations of different

cultures. Between the stages of minimalization and acceptance there is a transition which is characterized by a new way of perceiving the different cultures as dynamic and fluid and not as static and rigid.*iv. Acceptance* At this stage people do not have the expected behavior for acceptance but they start to behave as such. More precisely, they begin to give values to other cultures and begin to be co-creators of their own reality (Berger & Luckman, 1967). People in this phase start to find a way to explore differences of other cultures and do not feel that they are threatening to them. They begin to accept that people can have their own cultural norms and rules different from theirs and they feel amusement in that. This stage can be taken as the stage of marking openness in the way they perceive the differences. *v.Adaptation* This stage is essential for the development of intercultural communication. The process of acceptance of different cultures is a process of changes in behavior and perception of the world and it is the heart of intercultural communication. The basic form of adaptation is empathy. Bennet defines it as a temporary change of the frame of reference where we perceive situations as if we were the other person. Adaptation comes after acceptance and it is a change of behavior in terms of empathizing with people from another cultures.

vi.Integration: This is the last stage of openness to other cultures. In this stage the multicultural person is a one who is constantly in the process of becoming an integral part of a culture. This is being developed only after certain periods of living in different locations whereas the person contacts with different cultures. According to

Bennet (1986) "Integration indicates that individuals are able to become 'a part of and apart from a given cultural context" (p.186). In the last stage of Bennett's model, integration sees ethnorelativism exposed by the ability of the person to consciously consider different cultures and frames of reference at once, and sees individuals becoming truly multicultural: they are not bound to or identify with only one cultural identity.

Conclusion: To sum up, culture means the characteristics and knowledge of a particular group of people, defined by their language, religion, cuisine, social habits, music and arts from one hand. On the other hand, Intercultural communication is the communication that takes place people from different cultures. The importance of acquiring Intercultural Communication Competence is needed in order to improve the language and the quality of communication. What is more important is that one does not need to acquire the native speaker proficiency but rather to improve the reading, writing, speaking and listening skill and finally the cultural skill that traches learners to become diplomats. Finally, it can be concluded that for developing intercultural competence not only having and acquiring knowledge of intercultural communication is enough, but also a transformation of attitude and views of the world. In this case the transfer of knowledge is needed but it is not the most essential goal. If one does not feel the burden on their own skin experience is difficult to transfer. Learning and doing research in this field can really help in solving all the problems that are still present all around the world such as racism,

discrimination, ethnocentrism even wars. Learning and studying can really help in overcoming these problems and people involved in education should do everything in making this world a more peaceful place for living.

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