

Intercultural communication

Introduction

Summary

The book offers an individualized and multi-dimensional overview of a number of topics broadly falling into the area of intercultural communication. It sheds light on IC from the theoretical perspective and shows its practical dimension on different levels of social or professional life, as well as in mass-media communication.

The first chapter provides a necessary introduction to a framework of crucial notions which describe culture as an attribute of both individuals and human communities. Various ways of approaching culture depending on how it is defined are provided and its symbolic nature is revealed. The chapter also indicates the significance of culture as a guide to reality with cultural patterns as its emanation, or, in other words, cultural standards as a system helping members of a given culture act in a coherent way and assess the behaviours of others. Another issue covered in Chapter One is how culture-related contents and values are transmitted from one generation to another, how they ensure the existence of a given culture and how they shape the identity of its members. Finally, the chapter shows the role played by these contents and values in different kinds of communities.

Chapter Two presents the state of the art of intercultural research, as well as makes necessary methodological distinctions. Reference is made to major theorists and scholars researching culture in order to show how European and American research traditions differ. In this chapter different approaches to cultural differences and various typologies of cultures are acknowledged, among others, G. Hofstede's dimensions of culture and S. Schwartz's universal values. Moreover, an attempt is made to put European cultures into a system based on metaphors of nations as a synthetic understanding of the core of particular cultures. Chapter Two also continues the discussion of communities as subjects of culture, with a special focus on discourse communities.

The aim of Chapter Three is to sketch the socio-political determinants of intercultural contacts. Thus, it elaborates upon different types of linguo-cultural autonomy, such as national communities, national and ethnic minorities, and cultural autonomy characteristic of borderland areas (so-called borderland culture) and ethnic groupings outside the country of origin (diaspora). The authors pay special attention to the idea of linguo-cultural pluralism, which is characteristic for many countries and regions of the world. The discussion of different forms of shaping intercultural relations is based on the typology formulated by John Berry, and it comprises such categories as exclusion, segregation, assimilation and integration. Special emphasis is placed here on the concept of multiculturalism with its double-sided nature: as a phenomenon and as a socio-political programme.

Chapter Four intends to provide a description of language in its symbolic and systemic dimension. The relationship between language and culture is analysed here within A. Wierzbicka's framework of "key words", M. Agar's theory of "rich places" and the concept of linguistic relativism and linguistic worldview as developed by Jerzy Bartmiński and the Lublin school. The second part of the chapter reflects on how languages and cultures (or "languacultures") are acquired within bi- and multilingual contexts, exposing different dimensions of these processes. In particular, the benefits and drawbacks of functioning within two or more linguo-cultural systems, the specificity of child bilingualism and strategies for developing bi-/multilingualism in the home and school environment (bilingual education) are elaborated upon.

The purpose of Chapter Five is to lay the theoretical foundations for intercultural communication. First, the concepts of communication and intercultural communication are defined together with their different types. Next comes an overview of research into communication and intercultural communication, with a special focus on the groundbreaking input of E.T. Hall. Afterwards, the contribution of such research areas as sociolinguistics, pragmalinguistics, discourse analysis and conversation analysis is shown. A separate subchapter addresses the differences in communication styles, which greatly influence the effectiveness and quality of intercultural communication. The chapter concludes with reflections on (inter)cultural competence and intercultural communicative competence.

Psychosocial conditions of intercultural relations are the topic of Chapter Six. This part of the book contains a discussion of the specificity of interpersonal communication, as well as internal factors which shape such communication. Also, great attention is devoted to the phenomena of categorization and attribution, which influence the way one's own identity is experienced in relation with others. The authors also describe a variety of attitudes appearing in intercultural relations: conformism, ethnocentrism, tolerance, cultural openness or closure to otherness, and address the phenomenon of stereotyping and the role of ethnic stereotypes in intercultural communication. Here the essence and fundamentals of philosophy of dialogue are also presented, as a foundation for interpersonal relations. The final subchapter discusses individual ways of shaping interactions and overcoming difficulties in intercultural communication.

The topic of Chapter Seven is intercultural communication in electronic media. The chapter starts with an overview of mass media, with a special focus on its different forms: traditional media, electronic media, new media (websites, discussion forums, first-generation Internet online services) and "new new media" (which operate based on the Web 2.0 philosophy). The peculiar nature of those different kinds of media is reflected particularly well in

Internet genres. The division into levels of communication in reference to electronic media helps to demonstrate how interactive and social nature of contemporary media environments result in the emergence of Web 2.0 electronic discourse communities (politics 2.0, Internet advertising, political marketing, e-democracy, information cyberwarfare, citizen journalism).

Chapter Eight deals with the topic of intercultural communication in business settings. First, it presents possible communicative situations, their participants and role of intercultural relations in business. Next, the links between organizational and national cultures are discussed with reference to G. Hofstede's framework of organizational cultures, F. Trompenaars and Ch. Hampden-Turner's theory of dimensions of culture, and the dimensions of cultural clusters as developed within the GLOBE project. The authors discuss the most important aspects of intercultural management with the focus on two approaches: one that does not attribute much significance to the cultural context of economic activity (*culture-free*) and the other that acknowledges the specificity of different cultures (*culture-bound*). The discussion of the specificity of intercultural negotiations takes into account the characteristics of negotiators from different cultural spheres as proposed by R. Gesteland, and addresses the topics of the influence of cultural differences on negotiations, the significance of language of negotiations and the important role of translators. Since advertising is a special form of (inter)cultural communication in the business world as a part of marketing activity, it is awarded its proper place in a separate subchapter.

Chapter Nine constitutes a kind of summary of the discussion of intercultural communication conducted in the entire book. In this chapter, the authors show how the relation between language and culture, described in different ways in numerous parts of the book, should be reflected by and incorporated into modern language teaching methodology and business training. Here special attention is devoted to showing what place culture should occupy in foreign language learning, to what extent it should be "visible" or "hidden" in the layer of subject contents or grammatical and lexical expressions. The authors also lay down the framework of intercultural didactics on the basis of reports and regulations of European education policy. The chapter summarizes a plethora of approaches, methods, techniques, sample resources or activities (in particular, intercultural trainings), which enable the teacher to be effective at developing both linguistic, intercultural and intercultural communicative competence (ICC). Finally, the ways of developing and assessing these competences are elaborated upon.

The book also contains a comprehensive bibliography with a complete list of sources used, as well as a glossary of the most important terms appearing in the text.

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