

## INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

*Abduganiyeva Gulrukhsora Maqsudjon qizi*

*Faculty of World Languages Philology and language teaching  
(English language)*

## ABSTRACT

Abstract Online Intercultural Communication (OIC), related to the development of the Internet, digital environments and new media technological advancement, reflects the complexity of cultural contacts in the contemporary world. Without time or space limits or of any borders, OIC is enhanced by the creation of multilingual and multimodal contents, accessible to Internet users. However, it is of great interest to investigate how a specific situation such as the COVID-19 pandemic, but also in which way this situation allows a thorough redefinition of OIC due to the complexity of the means and values engaged. COVID 19 led to both the creation and the revelation of multiple expressions of cultural contacts in a virtual, as well as a real environment.

**Keywords:** intercultural communicative competence, task category, transferable skills, virtual exchange.

Intercultural communication is the idea of knowing how to communicate in different parts of the world. Intercultural communication uses theories within groups of people to achieve a sense of cultural diversity. This is in the hopes of people being able to learn new things from different cultures. The theories used give people an enhanced perspective on when it is appropriate to act in situations without disrespecting the people within these cultures; it also enhances their perspective on achieving cultural diversity through the ideas of intercultural communication.

Many people in intercultural business communication argue that culture determines how individuals encode messages, what medium they choose for transmitting them, and the way messages are interpreted.<sup>[1]</sup> With regard to intercultural communication proper, it studies situations where people from different cultural backgrounds *interact*. Aside from language, intercultural communication focuses on social attributes, thought patterns, and the cultures of different groups of people. It also involves understanding the different cultures, languages and customs of people from other countries.

Learning the tools to facilitate cross-cultural interaction is the subject of cultural agility, a term presently used to design a complex set of competencies required to allow an individual or an organization to perform successfully in cross-cultural situations.

Intercultural communication plays a role in social sciences such as anthropology, cultural studies, linguistics, psychology, and communication studies.

Intercultural communication is also referred to as the base for international businesses. Several cross-cultural service providers assist with the development of intercultural communication skills. Research is a major part of the development of intercultural communication skills. *Intercultural communication* is in a way the 'interaction with speakers of other languages on equal terms and respecting their identities'.

Identity and culture are also studied within the discipline of communication to analyze how globalization influences ways of thinking, beliefs, values, and identity within and between cultural environments. Intercultural communication scholars approach theory with a dynamic outlook and do not believe culture can be measured nor that cultures share universal attributes. Scholars acknowledge that culture and communication shift along with societal changes and theories should consider the constant shifting and nuances of society.

The intensive development of international economic relations and the expansion of cooperation between countries in various fields of economics and public life dictate the need to take into account the widest range of factors influencing the process of business interaction between representatives of different cultures engaged in international contacts. One of these factors can be identified as intercultural competence, which, in terms of its relevance, is on a par with such concepts as information culture, ritual culture, and human business culture. In Russia there is increased attention to a variety of problems of intercultural interactions between peoples. These are the following problems: the revival of religious traditions, rituals and customs, legal norms; ethnocultural conflicts, problems of cultural adaptation of migrants and emigrants. Managers of both large and medium-sized businesses face intercultural problems, as the process of globalization integrates the politics, economics and culture of different countries. In Russia, they speak more than a hundred languages and dialects, profess different religions, hold different political views, and occupy different socio-economic statuses. Intercultural communication as a modern scientific direction.

In Russia, a new discipline is taking its first steps. The Faculty of Foreign Languages at Moscow State University was one of the first in our country to study the problems of communication between cultures and peoples in connection with the teaching of foreign languages. So, a brief overview of the history of the emergence and development of the fairly young "Intercultural Communication" indicates the formation of its independent status and its isolation as a field of knowledge. However, this science is still in its infancy and does not have mature theoretical disciplines experience. Intercultural communication is a frequently used phrase today, the signification of which, unfortunately, is still ambivalent and does not have the desired definitional unambiguity. In different sources you can find a palette of related names for the term intercultural itself in accordance with the discipline considering it, the

preferences and goals of the authors of the publications. Intercultural communication as a scientific and applied discipline deals with the problems of understanding and mutual understanding: to understand someone else's (other), adequately communicate with someone else's, correctly interpret other cultural signs that are not one's own.

In terms of its genesis, subject relevance, as well as from the point of view of research tools, intercultural communication has an interdisciplinary status. It integrates the knowledge of a number of sciences, such as cultural anthropology, linguistics, pragmalinguistics, communication theory, ethnopsychology, sociology. Psychologists have found that the primary perception of a person is often the decisive factor for subsequent interaction with him. Communication with a stranger requires the use of a certain amount of knowledge to assess the possible results and consequences of contacts with him.

Here, one's own cultural norms are usually taken as criteria, on the basis of which one's appearance, internal qualities, and behavior are assessed. Each person seems to be able to objectively evaluate another person. This kind of representation is caused by the fact that the subject's perception of other people comes from his impressions and ideas about them. All information about other people enters through the senses in the form of sensations. The process of perception involves the reflection in the human mind of individual sensations about objects, situations and events in the external world, as a result of which sensory data is selected and organized in such a way that we can understand both obvious and hidden characteristics of the surrounding world.

When perceiving and assessing the world around us, a person is guided by his ideas about beauty, friendship, freedom, justice, etc. These perceptions depend on previous life experiences, personal interests, upbringing, socio-economic factors, etc. Due to the action of all these factors, the world opens up to a person in a variety of ways: from the most favorable for him to those that pose a threat to his existence. This means that a person's perception of reality is determined by cultural, social and personal characteristics. From a huge number of factors, scientists of this kind identify four main factors that mainly determine our perception of reality in the process of communication: the first impression factor, the superiority factor, the attractiveness factor and the attitude factor towards us. As you know, people perceive each other through the prism of existing stereotypes. When meeting representatives of other peoples and cultures, people usually have a natural tendency to perceive their behavior from the perspective of their culture.

The roots of the emergence of stereotypes lie in the objective conditions of people's lives, which are characterized by repeated repetition of monotonous life situations. This monotony is fixed in the human mind in the form of standard schemes

and thinking models. Stereotypes contain people's social experience and reflect what is common and repeated in their everyday practice.

They are formed during the joint activity of people by focusing human consciousness on certain properties, qualities of phenomena in the surrounding world that are well known, visible or understandable, at least to a large number of people. The psychological mechanism for the emergence of stereotypes is based on the principle of saving effort, characteristic of everyday human thinking. This principle means that people do not strive to react to the phenomena around them in a new way every time, but bring them under the categories they have

### **INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION AND CMC**

The aim of the present paper is to call for social change since it argues that the Internet has been underused to further mutual understanding. Also, the Internet has failed to create a common ground among people and their cultures. People who interact online form their own sub-cultural group and have the potential to create a common ground of understanding and communication. Intercultural communication has been accelerated by new technology in the form of transportation and communication systems. Nevertheless, there is no clear explanation of how the Internet affects the way people communicate interculturally. In other words, there is a lack of clarity about the term online intercultural communication. In order to describe, however, the scope and nature of intercultural communication, we need first to characterize the nature of culture. Geertz (1973) defines culture as "... a historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life". Culture describes the people's way of life in personal and social levels. In many cases, people form their interaction based on their unique cultural beliefs and values. Culture is a broad term including each country's cultural characteristics, society's subcultural groups, and humans' learned behaviors. Intercultural communication studies, then, examine the nature of interaction among people who have different cultural backgrounds. Through analyzing people's intercultural interaction, communication scholars are able to understand how verbal and non-verbal messages are filtered via each person's cultural characteristics. In intercultural communication process, people's symbols and meanings become shared and standardized. The continual use of the cultural symbols and meanings are converted into the cultural environment, which people take for granted. The term computer-mediated communication (CMC) refers to any exchange of messages through electronic media involving the use of computers. CMC has the potential to facilitate knowledge across cultures and languages. The study of CMC conceives new information technologies not only as data channels and banks, but also as spaces for meeting and interacting with people. Consequently, online intercultural

communication refers to the mode of interaction among Internet users who come from different cultural backgrounds and communicate via the Internet. People use the Internet for various purposes, such as businesses, entertainment, research, communication, etc. The question, however, is whether the use of the Internet facilitates intercultural communication.

### OIC: CONTEXTS AND CONTROVERSIES

Online intercultural communication during COVID-19 can be studied through different research perspectives such as the anthropologists' point of view. Manderson and Levin show how COVID-19 influenced all human activity and behavior. An unprecedented situation that concerns not only human perception and behavior in a global environment, but also closely connected to exceptional organized nation-states' actions to contain the viral spread. "Yet the institution of quarantine practices, lockdowns, and border controls, and the insistence on adherence to hygiene practices (handwashing) highlight how human practices and behaviors are implicated, and foreshadow a global humanitarian crisis as community transmission takes hold in global south communities". This approach demonstrates that what is defined as culture is the total of organized and non organized human habits and even though this is "happening in a new context of a new restraint away from blame". Human behavior is related to the real environment, and the pandemic threat requires an organized political intervention, closely connected to network. Official policies constitute a cornerstone of intercultural communication. One can refer to institutions, such as European Commission, UNESCO that promote intercultural communication in different ways (research programs cultural activities and events...). Nevertheless, lack of official EU policy concerning online intercultural communication activities is evident, since EU focuses on existing programs which promote intercultural communication in cities or societies e.g. Intercultural Cities Program.

### SUMMARY

In conclusion, I would like to note that intercultural communication, despite the ambivalence of the term itself, is one of the rapidly developing areas of humanitarian knowledge in recent times. Today, when the Earth is turning into a "global village", which inevitably entails more intense exchange between different cultures, the development of theoretical and practical problems of intercultural communication seems to be a strategic necessity.

OIC, related to Internet expansion, digital environment and new media technological advancement, reflects the complexity of cultural contacts in the contemporary world. Thus, the study of OIC must not neglect the plurality of means and contents that emerge. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic makes evident the specificities of OIC, interacted with a broader socio-political and cultural context. In

the real world and in the virtual world of Internet, the coronavirus pandemic led to both the creation and the revelation of multiple expressions of intercultural contacts.

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