LINGUISTIC AND INTERCULTURAL FACETS OF GLOBALIZATION

ASPECTE LINGVISTICE ŞI INTERCULTURALE ALE GLOBALIZĂRII

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Abstract
The paper analyzes the concepts of culture, interculturality, language, thought, mediation and how they (inter)relate in the global society. A special attention is given to the relationship between language and culture and, in this respect, important examples are provided. Also, we outline the catalyst role of linguistic and cultural mediators in the global society as they can interpret and communicate the socio-cultural context to ensure an effective communication between foreign speaking people/immigrants and institutions in the host country which provide education, social services and standard care in the field of health care.

Rezumat
Lucrarea analizează conceptele de cultură, interculturalitate, limbă, gândire, mediere şi cum (inter)relaţionează acestea în societatea globală. O atenţie deosebită se acordă relaţiei dintre limbă şi cultură şi, în acest sens, sunt furnizate exemple relevante. De asemenea, evidenţiem rolul catalizator al mediatorilor lingvistici şi culturali în societatea globală întrucât aceştia pot interpreta şi comunica contextul socio-cultural pentru a asigura o comunicare eficientă între străini/imigranţi şi instituţii din ţara gazdă care oferă educaţie, servicii sociale şi asistenţă standard în domeniul îngrijirii sănătăţii.

Key words: *culture, language, linguistic and intercultural mediation, globalization*

Cuvinte cheie: *cultură, limbă, mediere lingvistică şi interculturală, globalizare*

1. Introduction

Due to the effect of globalization, the term "culture" boasts numerous definitions and enjoys great notoriety. Yet it is a difficult term to define. According to Helen Spencer-Oatey, the American anthropologists, Kroeber and Kluckhohn, critically reviewed concepts and definitions of culture in 1952, and compiled a list of 164 different definitions (SPENCER-OATEY, 2012, 1). However, Apte (1994: 2001), as cited in SPENCER-OATEY, draws our attention to the fact that despite their efforts to define culture properly "there was in the early 1990s no agreement among anthropologists regarding its nature" (2012, 1). In the UNESCO Guidelines for Intercultural Education, "culture" is defined as "the whole set of signs by which the members of a given society recognize.... one another, while distinguishing them from people not belonging to that society." (UNESCO, 2006, 12) Furthermore, it is viewed as "the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of a society or social group… (encompassing) in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs" (Ibidem, 12).

From a different standpoint, Hofstede argues that people unavoidably carry several layers of mental programming within themselves, corresponding to different levels of culture, as follows (HOFSTEDE, 1991, 10):
- "a national level according to one's country (or countries for people who migrated during their lifetime);

- a regional and/or ethnic and/or religious and/or linguistic affiliation, as most nations are composed of culturally different regions and/or ethnic and/or religious and/or language groups;
- a gender level, according to whether a person was born as a girl or as a boy;
- a generation level, which separates grandparents from parents from children;
- a role category, e.g. parent, son/daughter, teacher, student;
- a social class level, associated with educational opportunities and with a person's occupation or profession;
- for those who are employed, an organizational or corporate level according to the way employees have been socialized by their work organization;"

We support Hofstede's viewpoint and we believe that it leads to the concept of "interculturality" which requires respect and appreciation from groups for other cultures in society, claims tolerance of a community towards the other community, and at the same time claims the individual's right to leave their own cultural group. In the European Union there are groups that coexist and help each other on all levels (social, economic, cultural, educational etc.), therefore "intercultural communication" has become indispensable as its benefits are obvious in today's global society (see Figure 1).

<pre>
                    Intercultural Communication
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Transformative learning   Cultural Literacy   Digital
                                 Literacy
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            Communication   Culture   Intercultural competence
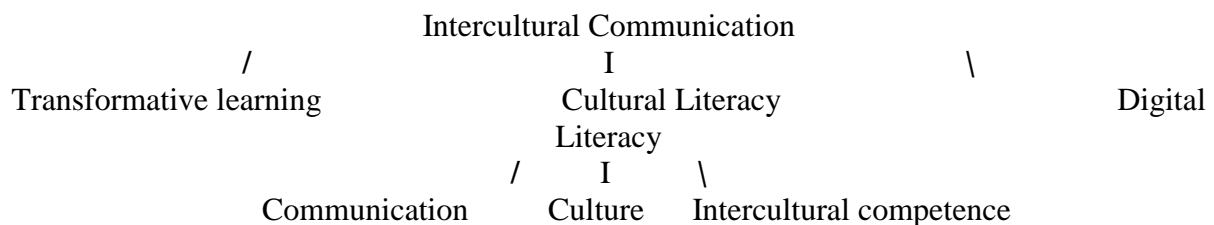</pre>
Figure 1: The benefits of intercultural communication

Engaged educational experiences are part of the transformative learning theory while enhancement of the learner's cultural awareness is part of language teaching and learning which focus on several techniques developed by Hughes (1986) and Risager (2007) illustrated in ZHU (2014, 5) as follows:

"Culture capsule" - this technique implies explicit discussion of the difference between one's own culture and the target language culture, facilitated by visual illustrations of the differences.

"Culture assimilators"- this technique focuses on scenario-based questions and answers. For example, a critical incident of intercultural communication is described and a number of possible explanations are given.

"Culture island" - it enhances one's awareness about cultural differences through decorating the classroom with posters, pictures, or anything else that remind students of the target language culture, and motivate students to think and talk about them.

"Drama" - this technique gives students the possibility to act out intercultural interactions, in which misunderstandings take place, and then to discuss possible explanations and solutions in the classroom.

We are cognizant that multicultural classes are ubiquitous in universities as the increasing globalization and multiculturalism brings university students whose histories are as migrants. Therefore, schools and universities must include intercultural learning as an important component of their teaching and learning programs in a responsible manner. Similarly, language teachers must enhance their skills of planning innovative curricula and of evaluating learning experiences to deal with the wide variety of specific needs that can arise in a multicultural class. On top of that, we strongly believe that the language teachers' role in a multicultural class should be based on the following principles:

- Language teachers should enhance their knowledge of ethnicity proactively to develop activities that meet the needs of students with a different ethnic background.

-   Language teachers should promote both openness for listening different views that reflect one's culture and respect for diversity in the sense that a mix of activities that represent the various cultures should be employed in class (e.g. *talking about festivals from their culture; how humour is perceived in their culture; explain their cultural characteristics of non-verbal behaviour in a meeting*, etc.).
-   Language teachers should engage their students in productive dialogues about tolerance and sensitivity to eliminate racism, and to promote intercultural teamwork (*project work on given topics*) that can foster mutual understanding through the identification of cultural differences within the team.

2. Language – Culture – Thought

Language is a core aspect of culture as it provides the environment in which the ability to communicate across cultures evolves. We perceive new horizons, increase our understanding of ourselves and of others and think globally due to the knowledge of one or several language. Moreover, languages spread across cultures and cultures spread across languages, therefore the impact of globalization on the relationship between language and culture is unquestionable (RISAGER, 2007; ZHU, 2014, 9).

The cultural context includes everything that belongs to the cultural tradition of a community that can be limited or wide as humanity as a whole (COJA *et al.*, 2003, 73). To the extent that it integrates the spiritual history of a community, the "cultural context" is a particular form of the "historical context". The "historical context" may be particular or universal, current or past. The authors illustrate the "historical context" in a few examples: *the mayor, the doctor, the priest* are individual denominations in particular historical contexts, while *the Pope* is a denomination individuated by the "current universal context", and the Salamina fight is a denomination individuated by the "past universal context" (Ibidem, 73). In Latin, "deus" means "god"; in Spanish, "Dios" ("God") is an individualized name of Christian monotheistic tradition (Ibidem, 73-74). The so-called "topoi" are recognized and function as such within a literary tradition; thus, for Spanish speakers, the expression "de cuyo nombre no quiero accordarme" (My translation in English: "whose name I do not want to remember") has a particular flavor as it recalls the text of Cervantes (Ibidem, 74).

In the logical-grammatical approach of the interaction between language and thought, language is perceived as a phenomenon subordinated to thought, in the sense that the appearance of the word is conditioned by the existence of the idea. As opposed to this theory, Humboldt contends that language is not only the product of thought, but thought itself as it is an instrument of thought, the organ that creates the idea. According to the American descriptivist school, thought and language are phenomena that relate to different aspects and require interpretations based on different principles; hence thought is considered an interior speech while language is a form of behavior - a concept mentioned in the theory of Leonard Bloomfield regarding stimuli and reaction in language activity (STOIAN, 2015, 148, 149).

When people speak the same language, it is often difficult to detect their place of origin by relying on vocabulary, grammar or accent. It is worth-mentioning the "Shibboleth" test (in the New Testament) which revealed the origin of people (COLLETT, 2011, 249). The men of Ephraim were defeated by the men of Galaad but they tried to go back crossing the Jordan stealthily. Wanting to make sure none of them escaped, the men of Galaad stopped all men who wanted to cross the river and asked if they were fleeing. If the man's answer was "No", then he was asked to pronounce the word "Shibboleth" (Ibidem, 249). Any person who pronounced the word starting with the letters "sh" was spared but those who pronounced the same word starting with the letter "s" were executed instantly (Ibidem, 249).

Several researchers argue that there is more to language than using a particular "code" in the sense that situated language use is also tightly intertwined with socio-cultural practices. Therefore, language needs to be understood as socio-culturally situated: "Linguistic meaning is inextricable

from the social practices (language games), in which language is used. The mastery of a language is embedded in, and in important ways formative of, one's cultural background." (ZLATEV and BLOMBERG, 2015, apud ZLATEV, 1997, 5)

Being the heart of issues of identity, memory and transmission of knowledge, language has become the most essential form of expression of human culture (UNESCO, 2006, 13). Language issues are central to culture and to concepts of education. Linguistic competencies are fundamental (see Figure 2) as they support individuals to integrate in democratic and plural societies, provide access to other cultures and encourage openness to cultural exchange (Ibidem, 13).
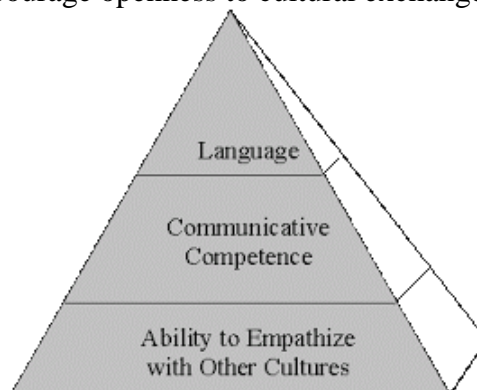

Figure 2: The Intercultural Pyramid
(Source: Matthew Gurney at http://iccith.blogspot.ro/2011/10/found-this-photo-great-explanation-of.html)

Knowing *how to speak* is not just speaking the "language" as such (MUNTEANU, 2011, 184). The so-called "linguistic competence" is also recognized as "the science" that speakers use in speech activity and encompasses a biological level and a cultural level (Ibidem, 184). At the cultural level, three types of linguistic competence occur: *the universal level → eloquent knowledge* (know how to speak in general according to the rules of thought and knowledge), *the historical level → idiomatic knowledge* (knowing a certain historical language) and *the individual level → expressive knowledge* (to know how to make speeches in determined situations) (Ibidem, 184). Suggesting Coşeriu's presentation "Deontology and ethics of language" and being in line with Zlatev (2011), the same author underlines the fact that to each of the levels mentioned above correspond three different kinds of *conformity judgments*: judgments of (a) congruence, (b) correctness and (c) appropriateness (MUNTEANU, 2011, 184; ZLATEV, 2011, 132).

3. Incursion into Cultures

Researchers assert that people tend to consider "culture" and "nation" synonymous terms. Undoubtedly, the culture or cultures, that co(exist) within the boundaries of a state influence the regulations of that nation, but the term "culture" is not synonymous with "nation" (SPENCER-OATEY, 2012, 18). For example, the nation of Japan is often regarded as so homogeneous that the word Japanese is commonly used to refer both to the nation and to the culture (Ibidem, 18). Although the Yamato Japanese culture is predominant in Japan, there are other cultures living there, such as the groups that include the Ainu, an indigenous group with their own culture, religion, and language; mainly from Okinawa, Korea, and China, and more recent immigrants also live there (Ibidem, 18). Also, the United States and Switzerland are great examples of nations that have several major cultural groups living within their geographical boundaries (Ibidem, 18).

In the book Through the Language Glass, the linguist Gary Deutscher, states that many primitive populations have names for only two or three colors, even though they are not physiologically incapable of perceiving all colors. Yet they are able of noticing the tones of the rainbow but do not have a name for them in their vocabulary. Hence these populations are considered colorblind on a cultural level, but not on a biological level (DEUTSCHER, 2010; STOIAN, 2015, 153-154).

In terms of language, it is often difficult for Europeans to distinguish Americans from Canadians. In this regard, there are certain words whose pronunciation is different and that can betray a Canadian.

For example, Canadians tend to pronounce words like "shout" and "about" "shoot" and "aboot" while Americans are inclined to say "hayouse" instead of "house" (CHAMBERS, 1973, apud COLLETT, 2011, 250). Americans tend to salute with "*What a wonderful day!*", while Canadians prefer "*It's a wonderful day, isn't it?*" We notice that Americans opt for a declarative sentence while Canadians prefer to formulate their affirmations in the form of questions (Ibidem, 250). Regarding the Romanian culture, specifically, the Romanian salutation formula „Sărut mâna!" (My translation: "Allow me to kiss your hand!") sparks the curiosity of foreigners as it does not necessarily imply kissing the hand of a lady and sometimes they are surprised to hear and see that it is used to greet respectfully a lady or a young lady, even in a business context.

Peter Collett adds that it is also difficult for foreigners to distinguish Australians from New Zealanders because their accent is similar (COLLETT, 2011, 250).There are, however, differences between the English spoken in New Zealand and the English spoken in Australia; some differences are related to vocabulary - for example, the English spoken in New Zealand borrowed more words from the native Maori population, while the English spoken in Australia borrowed many words from aborigines (Ibidem, 250). There are also differences in the pronunciation of some vowels in the sense that Australians pronounce differently words like "air" and "ear" while New Zealanders pronounce both of them as "ear" (Ibidem, 250). The pronunciation of the "i" sound is the most significant difference between the different dialects (Ibidem, 250). New Zealanders pronounce "bat" as "bet", "bet" as "bit" and "bit" as "but". English people eat "fish and chips", Australians extend the vowels and thus eat "feesh and cheeps", and New Zealanders turn the "i" into "u" and eat "fush and chups" (BELL, 1997, apud COLLETT, 2011, 250).

A recent study pinpoints the contact between different cultures; for example, the Romanians and the Slavs have experienced cultural contacts over centuries, thus exchanging and enriching images and symbols which circulated in both directions within the processes of acculturation and assimilation (STANCIU, 2017, 77). The author found that the cosmic tree image and all its variants like the tree of life, tree of knowledge, tree of heaven, are preserved as poetic images in the traditions of both Romanians and Slavs (Ibidem, 78).

Dorin Bodea (Results Development), the author of the volume "Romanians, a predictable future?", which includes the findings of his study on the cultural characteristics of the Romanians shows that Romanians are too attached to the past, and this cultural trait associated with the difference between how they perceive each other and how they perceive other nations hinders their progress (CONSTANTINESCU, 2012).

An important aspect concerning the translation between languages is signaled by Zlatev who highlights Coşeriu's viewpoint that *sense* has priority over designation (and meaning): "Precisely because the specific content of a text is its sense, we must give up the designation in order to express the same sense" (COŞERIU, 1967, apud ZLATEV, 2011, 132). An eloquent example is the conventional way of expressing apologies which differs across languages; for example, if one were to translate the Italian *Mi dispiace* literally into English as *I dislike it*, it could be (potentially) a *congruent* representation of the mental state of the speaker, a *correct* English sentence, but it would be *inappropriate* as an apology (Ibidem, 132).

Furthermore, considering both verbal and non-verbal cues, in line with Collett, we can say that there is also considerable evidence that behavioral indicators in everyday life reveal a high content of information. The way we stand when we talk to someone, the way we move our feet, hands, eyes and eyebrows tells a lot about the degree of involvement in conversation and the fundamental attitude towards the other (COLLETT, 2011, 14). A behavioral indicator must meet four requirements (Ibidem, 14-15):
- It must be a type of activity such as a trait in the physical aspect of a person, a movement of the body or something he/she said.
- The action must convey something that is not directly observable - it must communicate to us the provenance or education, thoughts, mood or intentions. There are also actions that we do not recognize as behavioral indicators because we have not yet discovered what they say about a

person. These can be called unspecified behavioral indicators. When a person comes to understand their connection with other people's inner states, they will also be added to the list of behavioral indicators.

- The action must be observed. Large, expansive body movements are more likely to attract attention, while passive movements are often ignored either because they haven't been observable for a long time or because they have been eclipsed by other actions.

- The meaning of the action must be recognized. In other words, it is not enough to notice that someone has a certain posture or used an unusual facial expression. We need to recognize what the posture or expression communicates about the person in front of us.

These are very important issues for those who work in multicultural environments and want to improve their intercultural communication as well as for those who want to find quick solutions to facilitate and speed up networking and business results.

When it comes to turn-taking dynamics, a comprehensive study conducted by Bargiela - Chiappini & Harris (1996) shows that during multi-party talk in British and Italian management meetings, participants with higher status or expertise tend to have longer and more turns, and at the same time as they interrupt and are interrupted more frequently, while those with low status or less expertise rarely interrupt and are rarely interrupted (BARGIELA-CHIAPPINI & HARRIS, 1996, apud ZHU, 2014, 27).

4. Linguistic and Intercultural Mediation

Europe has always had a key role in the global economy, arts and history. In today's global society, the relations between countries and cultures are constantly developing. The phenomenon of migration has transformed Europe into a multicultural area, where persons of different languages, religious backgrounds and cultures cohabitate. The person who enters another cultural horizon will face another system of perceiving reality, with a set of specific cultural visions of time and space, and a different way of dealing with another person in various situations (BURETE, 2012). These people face various problems related to social integration, labor market, health care, due to the local specificity which is different from the national one, from which an individual comes from (Ibidem, 2012). As these problems require a link to various institutions in order to solve them, hence the necessity of forming people from these populations to mediate and to solve the problems between migrant citizens of a certain ethnicity and the state institutions in which they chose to live and work has become a rule in many countries. However, in Switzerland it has been determined that the use of nonprofessional interpreters (children, members of the family, friends, relatives or cleaning staff) leads to problems due to the lack of objectivity and neutrality, no guarantee of quality and accuracy (omission of parts of the subject matter of talks), the lack of linguistic and subject-related competence and no guarantee of confidentiality (EICKE, 2005, apud TRANSKOM, 2012, 10).

There are different definitions, concepts and historical developments on cultural mediation in various countries (TRANSKOM, 2012, 1). Thus, the English terms used, for instance "community interpreting", "public service interpreting" or "liaison interpreting" have different designations in Germany , i.e. people refer to "language and cultural mediation" or "language and integration mediation"; in Austria, the term "community interpreting" is currently in use while in Switzerland the term "intercultural translation" is nationally recognized (Ibidem,1).

The *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* states that „mediating language activities – (re) processing an existing text – occupy an important place in the normal linguistic functioning of our societies" (2001, 4). In this respect, the intercultural mediator uses his own linguistic and cultural knowledge, his ability to relate to others in order to better interpret and express the characteristics and needs of immigrants. Therefore, they should have: cognitive competence (the ability to know the culture and language of the one they come into contact with, the history, the concepts of the world, the morals and the rules of relationship); affective competence and empathy; and operational competence; They can also act as synthesizers who can manage to reconcile and synthesize disparate cultural practices, without incurring the so-called

marginal syndrome (BOCHNER, 1981,17-19, apud ARCHIBALD & GARZONE, 2014, 13) that would make them fall between various social systems and feel outsiders in both cultures (TAFT, 1981, 59-60, STONEQUIST, 1935 apud ARCHIBALD & GARZONE, 2014, 13). However, Coste & Cavalli articulate that it is important for those involved in mediation with migrants to understand and to accept the considerable responsibility that the role of mediator involves (COSTE & CAVALLI, 2015, 62).

Generally speaking, depending on the action plan of the intercultural mediator, three types of mediation (BURETE, 2012) can be distinguished:
- Privative mediation consisting of facilitating communication and understanding between people with different cultural codes;
- Rehabilitation mediation that intervenes in solving the conflicts of values between the cultural minority and the majority society or inside the cultural minority;
- Creative mediation that consists of a process of transforming rules or creating new rules.
Intercultural mediation is applied worldwide, from US, Canada to Europe (e.g. problem-solving strategies with immigration are implemented in Austria, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Netherlands, Ireland, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Spain, Switzerland, etc.). This implies sensitization of the local people to the concerns of the foreign population, mediation, resolution of conflicts as well as further training courses on cultural topics and backgrounds (TRANSKOM, 2012, 34). Unlike intercultural mediation in US and Europe, in modern China, there are two categories of mediation; Community Mediation (Ren Min TiaoJie), which is part of the Alternative Dispute Resolution system, and Court-Performed Mediation (Fa Ting Chu MianTiaoJie), which is part of the Justice system (KLEINLEIN, 2014).

In our view, the intercultural and linguistic mediator should also act as a proactive educator. In other words, he/she should provide the linguistic support, motivate people to be open not only to national values but also to international values, and to increase the spirit of understanding beliefs, traditions and approaches in various contexts. As human beings we need to be understood and valued, therefore we do think that the implementation of programs focused on inclusion could be achieved through a fruitful collaboration with various stakeholders (city halls, schools, universities, organizations that promote equality, etc).

5.   Conclusions

Our society is affected by three major inter-related dimensions: culture, quality of life and globalization. Communication in languages requires skills like mediation and intercultural understanding. Interpersonal, intercultural, social, and language competences help individuals be active and constructive in social and working life, and to resolve conflict in increasingly diverse societies. In other words, the intercultural dialogue has as starting point the recognition of the difference and of the many perspectives and dimensions of the world in which we live. These differences, opinions, views and even values do not exist only within a culture, and they are more visible in the conflicts between different cultures. Communication between immigrants and representatives of the host country is assisted by language and intercultural mediators.

We believe that the increasing phenomenon of immigration will lead to the implementation of new strategies for helping immigrants integrate in the host community, with the support of linguistic and intercultural mediators, whose role has been redefined in many European countries, taking into account the needs of immigrants. From the perspective of a language teacher, we consider that we should equip our students with the skills of interacting in a multicultural work environment and expressing their willingness to know more about other cultures as work mobility has become a norm worldwide.

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