The Intercultural Perspective in a Multicultural World

11th NIC-Conference
Kristiansand

The Intercultural Perspective in a Multicultural World

11th NIC-Conference

Eds:
Eilef Gard and Birte Simonsen

Preface

The 11th Conference of the Nordic Network for Intercultural Communication, held in Kristiansand 26 – 28 November 2004, attracted a variety of professionals in the field of communication: scholars, researchers, educators and other practitioners. Although the purpose of NIC is to promote cooperation in the Nordic countries (including the Baltic countries) between researchers and practitioners interested in intercultural communication the arranging committee was happy to welcome individuals from other European countries and even from as far as Australia.

The theme of the conference was "The Intercultural Perspective in a Multicultural World". Participants were invited to submit papers on topics that were related to the main theme. The papers which were presented at the conference demonstrated that intercultural communication is both a scientific field in its own right, and that it is being applied in a multitude of settings where people with different cultural backgrounds meet and exchange ideas and information, work and do business together, study or in any other way are engaged in intercultural encounters.

At the sessions during the conference intercultural communication was discussed from different perspectives, such as education, research, business, globalisation, media and health. The form of the presentations varied but may be grouped under two main categories: scientific papers that were part of larger research projects, and sharing of experiences which had a more informal and report-like form and which were not intended for publication in the present collection of articles from the conference. All were welcome and appreciated, however, and we hope that some of the projects not included in this publication may be available for others in the future, either in NIC conferences or in other connections.

Two key note speakers were invited: Milton J. Bennett, director of The Intercultural Development Research Institute, and Elisabeth Eide, assistant professor at Oslo University College. We are very grateful for their contribution to the conference. Their articles are included in this volume.

After the conference the presenters were invited to submit their papers to an editing committee which had the mandate to do a selection and publish them in book form in a series at the University College of Kristiansand. The present volume then

consists of selected articles that were deemed suited for publication by the committee in consultation with external referees.

The editing committee has consisted of Birte Simonsen, University College of Kristiansand, and Eilef Gard, Gimlekollen School of Journalism and Communication. We would like to express our gratitude to the contributors of the articles and to the University College of Kristiansand, which has generously included this volume in their series of publications. Finally, thanks also to the Cultiva Foundation for their economic support of the conference and this publication.

Kristiansand, November 2006
Birte Simonsen Eilef J. Gard

Skriftserien nr. 145e

241 sider
210,- NOK

ISSN:1504-9299
ISBN: 978-82-7117-637-2

Serviceboks 422, N-4604 Kristiansand

Design: Universitetet i Agder

Innhold

Milton J. Bennett

Considering the Measurement of Cultural Phenomena and Intercultural Competence

This is a working paper that considers the construction and measurement of some phenomena that are typically of concern in intercultural relations. Some of the material included in this paper has been presented at an academic seminar on the "Construction and Measurement of Cultural Orientations/Intercultural Competencies" at Humboldt University, Berlin, March 30, 2004, and as a keynote address to the 11th Conference of the Nordic Network for Intercultural Communication, Kristiansand, Norway, November 26, 2004.

I will distinguish between two classes of phenomena that belong to different logical types (Bertrand Russell) and suggest that the methodology of measurement of those phenomena and the application of that measurement to explaining events should match their types. That is, the first-order measurement of "culture" should be treated as a different operation than the second-order measurement of "intercultural." Confusion of these measurements and their applications will generate incoherent conclusions. Further, I will suggest that intercultural competence, or ability, can be inferred in two distinct ways; the first from traditional measurements of knowledge, attitudes, and skills, and the other from non-traditional measurements of experience. The latter approach is based on the *Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity* (Bennett, 1986, 2004) and involves a translation of qualitative content-analysis methods into a reliable psychometric instrument, the *Intercultural Development Inventory*™. I will argue that the measurement of experience is a better basis for inferring intercultural competence.

Measuring the Cultural Worldview

Cultural phenomena are variously called subjective culture, cultural orientation, or cultural worldview. These terms refer to the patterns of beliefs, behaviors, and values maintained by groups of interacting people that constitute the internalized product of

human socialization (Berger & Luckmann). This idea of culture is consistent with the general idea of cultural relativity generated by Franc Boas and Margaret Mead, among other American anthropologists. In the field of intercultural relations, cultural worldview is commonly described in terms of a cultural value framework originally developed by Florence Kluckhohn and Clyde Strodtbeck and modern formulations such as those of Stewart and Bennett, Hofstede, Trompenaars, Harris, and others. These frameworks derive from the general idea that subjective culture can be described at least partially in terms of the assignment of goodness to ways of being in the world, the original Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck idea. Other aspects of subjective culture were originally formulated by Edward T. Hall around the same time as Kluckhohn and Strodbeck's work. Current formulations of cultural style such as Stella Ting-Toomey's facework framework or Mitchell Hammer's styles of conflict derive from the general idea that culturally preferred behavior can be placed along various continua, the original Hall idea of high to low context behavior.

The measurement of cultural worldview places an individual within the categories or continua defined by a particular formulation of cultural values and behavior. This measurement provides the respondent with a profile of his or her own preferences in regard to the defined constructs and perhaps with a contrast to other possible cultural orientations. The logical type of this type of description is *first-order*. First-order descriptions organize a set of phenomena into categories. Descriptions of culture as this level are logically similar to the statement; "Scottish terriers are smaller than Irish setters," which also organizes a set of phenomena (dogs) into particular categories (terriers and setters).

The appropriate use of first-order measurements is only descriptive or contrastive. So, for instance, Hofstede's constructs are used appropriately to generate the hierarchies that describe and contrast national cultures in terms of his dimensions. Of course, different first-order measurements yield different configurations of cultures and contrasts. Trompenaars' constructs differ from those of Hofstede, and they therefore generate different cultural orientations and different contrasts.
Some practitioners may fall into the naïve belief that one description of culture is better than another. Of course, such a belief ignores the fact that description is necessarily linked to a defined set of measured constructs. However, one could (and should) consider the goodness of the underlying measurement in terms of its theoretical coherence and methodological rigor. Further, one could (and should)

evaluate a description as being more or less useful than another for some purpose. For instance, the methodology used by Hofstede incorporates national culture distinctions, and so it is particularly useful in considering national culture. Hofstede's dimensions are less useful in describing ethnic, gender, or class culture differences, since his measurement did not incorporate the constructs or the methodology most appropriate to those cultural distinctions.

Cultural orientation measures may be inappropriately overextended from first-order description into second-order analysis. That is, a particular cultural orientation, or a greater or lesser contrast of one's own culture with a different target culture, might be mistakenly taken to indicate some particular level of intercultural competence or adaptability. This is a confusion of logical type. First-order measurements can only be used to make first-order descriptions: "this is your culture (as conceived by this system), and this is how it compares to other cultures (as conceived by this system)." The ability to deal with cultural differences is a second-order operation, since it necessitates a meta-level position *vis a vis* culture itself. Thus, intercultural (as opposed to cultural) behavior needs to be measured differently.

The inappropriate application of first-order measurement has at least two practical consequences in corporations and other organizations. The first is that a majority of training resources may be expended on the measurement and presentation of cultural orientation in the mistaken belief that the outcome of the measurement will tell participants something about their intercultural competence. In fact, people can be either more or less interculturally competent no matter what their own and the target culture is. And in a second, related confusion of logical type, the organization may seek to create an intercultural competent corporate culture. In fact, any corporate culture can be either more or less supportive of intercultural competence, because intercultural competence does not exist on the same logical level as the values and behaviors that constitute the culture of the organization.

Sophisticated interculturalists face a challenge in dealing with first-order cultural orientation measurements. People like these measurements, and there are a lot of them around. And the descriptions they generate are useful for cultural self-awareness and knowledge of other cultures. But the temptation of the organizations (and some interculturalists) is to stop at this level. Long-term effectiveness studies of such truncated programs are unlikely to show improvements in intercultural competence, because both cultural self-awareness and cultural knowledge must be placed in a second-order context to be useful constituents of intercultural competence.

Intercultural Worldview

The addition of "inter-"to "cultural" signals the shift to a *second-order* logical type. Whatever it is called – intercultural or cross-cultural competence or adaptation – this type of phenomenon exists on a meta-level to culture. Intercultural operations assume that one's own and other cultures have been defined and described, and that the attention is now on how to analyze and manage relations among them.

Regarding the construction of intercultural phenomena, we should remember that they depend on the prior construction of cultural phenomena. It may be that organizations and their consultants not only err in overextending the application of first-order phenomena, as suggested above, but they may also err in not defining the first-order phenomena sufficiently before moving to the second-order considerations. That would mean that training programs or other interventions (e.g. executive coaching) jump too quickly into skill development without a sufficiently defined conceptual structure for "culture" itself. Long-term effectiveness studies of such preemptive programs are also unlikely to show improvements in intercultural competence, because the attempted development of second-order skills lacked a sufficiently coherent first-order foundation.

Measurements of intercultural phenomena have depended heavily on the assumptions and methods of cross-cultural psychology (Ward, Handbook of Intercultural Training, Third Edition (HIT3) for a good summary of these efforts). Cross-cultural psychology shares the assumption with psychology in general that certain "psychological" variables such as personal traits, or constellations of cognitions, affective conditions, and behaviors can be correlated with certain outcomes so as to establish either a causal or at least somewhat predictable relationship between the two. Depending on a particular school's paradigmatic bent, the psychological variables may be assumed to be stable descriptions of universal human phenomena (e.g. the Big Five personality traits) or, alternatively, the variables may be assumed aspects of schema or other mental constructs. In any case, a major effort of cross-cultural adaptation research is to discover or define the relevant psychological variables that cause/explain/predict the effective management of cultural difference.

Conceptual overextension may occur if there is not a good theoretical basis for relating a particular set of constructs to intercultural outcomes. For instance, according to Richard Brislin (personal communication) there is no reason to assume that personality as measured by the Meyers-Briggs Type Inventory is either universal or has anything

to do with intercultural adaptation. Yet that instrument is commonly used with the implication that information generated by it will be useful in an intercultural context.

Interculturalists are likely to be familiar with two types of instruments based on cross-cultural psychology methodology (See Paige in HIT3 for a complete overview of instruments used in intercultural training). One type is the traditional measurement of traits or characteristics that are theorized to be connected with intercultural effectiveness. Measurements of prejudice, open-mindedness, and similar constructs would fall into this category. The other is criteria-referenced measurement, which seeks to measure characteristics that have been shown in other research to be associated with some kind of intercultural effectiveness.

A good example of a criteria-referenced instrument is the Cross-Cultural Adaptability Inventory (CCAI, Colleen Kelly). The four dimensions measured – emotional resilience, personal autonomy, flexibility/open-mindedness, and perceptual acuity – were chosen because they appeared to have the strongest relationship to intercultural outcomes in traditional correlational studies. By assessing how people self-attribute strengths in these areas, an inference is made about their general aptitude for cross-cultural adaptation.

The CCAI and other criterion-referenced instruments limit the potential for conceptual overextension by linking their dimensions to actual demonstrations of connection to intercultural outcomes. However, in the process they may lose conceptual coherence. For instance, the theoretical connection between personal autonomy and perceptual acuity is unclear, even if each of those constructs correlates relatively well with outcomes. As such, criterion-referenced measurements are necessarily limited in their explanatory power.

Since the methodological requirements are similar for any credible psychometric instrument, the relevant questions are 1) what constructs are being measured, and 2) what indicators (inventory items, usually) are being used to measure them. The plethora of instruments of this type attests to the many answers possible to these questions. However, according to Mitchell Hammer (private communication), no combination of constructs and indicators has much better than a .33 correlation with any outcome of intercultural effectiveness. According to Hammer, this degree of correlation is sufficient to demonstrate a relationship between the variable(s) and the

outcome, but it is far from the "holy grail" of causative explanation for effective intercultural behavior.

Measuring Intercultural Experience

The failure of cross-cultural psychology to generate a powerful predictive and explanatory measure of intercultural competence can be attributed to the inherent limitation of a traditional psychological approach to understanding intercultural phenomena. Traditional psychology (including cross-cultural psychology) is heavily invested in positivism and linear causality. This paradigm has already proved inadequate to explain relatively simple group phenomena such as family relationships, where research has turned to the mutual causality approach of systems theory (e.g. Watzlawick, Jackson, the Palo Alto school). I suggest that the traditional paradigm is also inadequate to explain the more complex group phenomena associated with cultural and intercultural experience.

The more appropriate epistemological assumption is that experience (including cross-cultural experience) is constructed. This is the central tenant of *cognitive constructivism*, most notably stated by George Kelly in his *Psychology of Personal Constructs.* He pioneered the mid-twentieth century resurrection of the idea that we do not perceive events directly. Rather, our experience of events is built up through templates, or sets of categories, that we construct to organize our perception of phenomena. This idea has been given more current applications by Heinz Von Foerster, Ernst Von Glassersfeld, and Paul Watzlawick, among others.

In addition to providing intercultural relations with the idea of culture as a "template," Kelly suggested the basic idea of ethnocentrism used in the developmental approach to intercultural competence. In his "experience corollary," he states that experience is not a function of being in the vicinity of events when they occur; rather, experience depends on one's construal of the events. So, for instance, an American person who happens to be in the vicinity of Japanese events may not have anything like a Japanese experience of that event, if he or she does not have any Japanese categories with which to construe the events. Instead, he or she will have an American experience in the vicinity of the Japanese events. This is an example of an *ethnocentric* experience, meaning that one's own culture is the only basis for perceiving and organizing events into categories.

The original form of cognitive constructivism, including its application by Piaget to cognitive development, was sometimes criticized as being too "mental." A collection

of current theoreticians who could be called *experiential constructivists* has extended constructivism into other dimensions of human experience. They include the anthropologist Gregory Bateson, the biologists Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela, the psycholinguists George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, the neuroanatomist Antonio Damasio, the communicologist Dean Barnlund, and my some of my own work with Ida Castiglioni. All these theoreticians refer to how we "co-create" our experience through our corporal, linguistic, and emotional interaction with natural and human (including conceptual) environments.

In this view, the crux of intercultural competence is the ability to construct alternative cultural experiences. In other work, I have called this ability *intercultural sensitivity* (the *Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity*). Individuals who have received largely monocultural socialization normally have access only to their own cultural worldview, so they are unable to experience the difference between their own perception and that of people who are culturally different. The development of intercultural sensitivity describes how we gain the ability to create an alternative experience that more or less matches that of people in another culture. People who can do this have a more intercultural worldview.

Measures of subjective experience have traditionally used purely qualitative research methods such as interviewing or non-parametric quantitative methods such as content analysis. In recent work reported in a special issue of the *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, Mitch Hammer and I with the help of Rich Wiseman have developed an instrument – the *Intercultural Development Inventory* (IDI) – that provides a parametric quantitative measure of intercultural worldview. The instrument uses confirmatory factor analysis to organize items derived from interviews and content analysis into reliable scales with good construct validity.

With the IDI is possible to make predictions about intercultural competence based on the actual ability to experience cultural difference, not on assumed traits or characteristics. Predictions based on traits and characteristics are likely to be inconsistent, because they will show a correlation with intercultural outcomes *only if* there is sufficient intercultural sensitivity present. Since such sensitivity is sometimes present and sometimes not, the results of such measurements will show significant but mysteriously inconsistent correlations with outcomes. That is, of course, what the current measures show. The measurement of intercultural sensitivity should provide a better prediction of intercultural outcomes.

Bibliography of Constructivist Approaches

(Not inclusive of or restricted to text references)

Applegate, J. L., & Sypher, H. E. (1988). Constructivist theory and intercultural communication research. In Y. Kim & W. Gudykunst (Eds.), *Theoretical perspectives in intercultural communication* (pp. 41–65). Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Barnlund, D. (1998). Communication in a global village. In M. J. Bennett (Ed.), *Basic concepts of intercultural communication: A reader* (pp. 35–51). Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press.

Bateson, G. (1972). *Steps to an ecology of mind: Collected essays in anthropology, psychiatry, evolution, and epistemology.* San Francisco, CA: Chandler.

Bateson, G. (1979). *Mind and nature: A necessary unity.* New York: Dutton.

Bennett, M. J. (2004). From ethnocentrism to ethnorelativism . In J.S. Wurzel (Ed.) *Toward multiculturalism: A reader in multicultural education*. Newton, MA: Intercultural Resource Corporation.

Bennett, J. M., & Bennett, M. J. (2004). Developing intercultural sensitivity: An integrative approach to global and domestic diversity. In D. Landis, J. Bennett & M. Bennett (Eds.), *Handbook of intercultural training* (3rd ed, pp. 147–165). Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Bennett, M. J. (1986). A developmental approach to training for intercultural sensitivity. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 10*(2), 179–196.

Bennett, M. J. (1993). Towards ethnorelativism: A developmental model of intercultural sensitivity. In R. M. Paige (Ed.), *Education for the intercultural experience* (2nd ed., pp. 21–71). Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press.

Bennett, M. J. (1998b). Intercultural communication: A current perspective. In M. J. Bennett (Ed.), *Basic concepts of intercultural communication: A reader* (pp. 1–34). Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press.

Bennett, M. J., & Castiglioni, I. (2004). Embodied ethnocentrism and the feeling of culture: A key to training for intercultural competence. In D. Landis, J. Bennett & M. Bennett (Eds.), *Handbook of intercultural training* (3rd ed, pp. 249–265). Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Berger, P., & Luckmann, T. (1967). The social construction of reality: A treatise in the sociology of knowledge. Garden City, NJ: Anchor.

Brown, G. S. (1972). *Laws of form*. Toronto, Canada: Bantam.

Damasio, A. (1999). *The feeling of what happens: Body and emotion in the making of consciousness.* New York: Harcourt Brace.

Delia, J. G. (1987). Interpersonal cognition, message goals, and organization of communication: Recent constructivist research. In D. L. Kincaid (Ed.), *Communication theory: Eastern and western perspectives* (pp. 255–273). San Diego, CA: Academic Press.

Delia, J. G., Crockett, W. H., & Gonyea, A. H. (1970). Cognitive complexity and the effects of schemas on the learning of social structures. *Proceedings of the 78th Annual Convention of the American Psychological Association,* 5, 373–374.

Glaser, B., & Strauss, A. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory.* Chicago, IL: Aldine.

Goertzel, B. (n.d). Faces of psychological complexity. Retrieved January 8, 2004 from http://www.goertzel.org/papers/intro.html

Hammer, M. R., Bennett, M. J., & Wiseman, R. (2003). Measuring intercultural sensitivity: The Intercultural Development Inventory. In R. M. Paige (Guest Ed.). Special issue on the Intercultural Development. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 27*(4), 421–443.

Loevinger. J. (1979). *Scientific ways in the study of ego development*. Worchester, MA: Clark University Press.

Loevinger. J., & Wessler, R. (1970). *Measuring ego development*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Kelly, G. (1963). *A theory of personality.* New York: Norton.

Lakoff, G. (1987). *Women, fire, and other dangerous things: What categories reveal about the mind*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (1980). *Metaphors we live by.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (1999*). Philosophy in the flesh: The embodied mind and its challenge to Western thought*. New York: Basic Books*.*

Maturana, H., & Varela, F. (1987). *The tree of knowledge: The biological roots of human understanding* (Rev. ed.). Boston: Shambhala.

Perry, W. B. (1999). *Forms of intellectual and ethical development in the college years: A scheme.* New York: Holt.

Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1990). Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Varela, F. J., Thompson, E., & Rosch, E. (1991). The embodied mind: Cognitive science and human experience. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Von Foerster, H. (1984). On constructing a reality. In P. Watzlawick (Ed.), *The invented reality: Contributions to constructivism* (pp. 41–61). New York: Norton.

Per Inge Båtnes

The construction of meaning in multivultural dialogues

(some experiences from the university college).

Paper at 11th Conference of the Nordic Network for Intercultural Communication 26-28 November 2004 – Kristiansand, Norway.

Abstract: *Is the common concept of dialogue misleading the practice of multicultural communication in higher education? In what sense could that be the case? What if dialogue as an educational practice merely emphasizes the ability to master "legitimate" discourse practices? What if established modes of dialogue thus promote the ideal of identical consciousness or an apparent confluence of minds, rather than the ideal of rendering diversity meaningful in separate but interwoven lives? Our experiences suggest that multicultural communication in education often turns problems of relationships into problems of proper tuning or noise reduction. Perhaps we should try to revise our concept of dialogue to make it more compatible with actual differences in perceptions and motivations among students. Some illustrating examples related to educational practices at OsloUniversity College will be discussed.*

Shortcomings of dialogue

Is the common concept of dialogue facilitating the process of generating meaning in multicultural communication? On the basis of some evidence, I will argue that the ideal of dialogue must be scrutinized (examined) if it is still to function as a guiding principle in multicultural learning environments.

Distinction between dialogue and dissemination

Most of us have more or less adapted an idea of communication as the accurate sharing of consciousness – the matching of minds. It is a dream of mental contact that at the same time triggers the nightmare of mutual isolation: Looking for shared interiority releases the horror of inaccessibility and can lead to a certain impatience with the humble means of language. Perhaps we should reject this mentalist vision of communication and its accompanying subjectivization of meaning.

John Durham Peters (1999) suggests that communication should be less about signals and more about signification – less about surface language, more about meaning. Sending clear messages is no guarantee for better relations. The dream of perfect dialogue inhibits (obstructs) the hard work of connecting people – it misleads us from the task of building worlds together.

Heidegger and Dewey suggest the following alternative view: We are bound together in existential and lived ways before we even open our mouth to speak. Communication then, does not merely involve transmitting information about one's intentionality; rather, it implies bearing oneself in such a way that one is open to hearing the other. Accordingly, our task is to recognize the otherness in the other, not to rearrange it in our image (cf. Levinas).

Jesus against Socrates

The concept of dialogue which Peters is criticizing stems from the ideal of monocultural communication presented by Plato in his dialogues. Socrates is guided by a vision of intimate relation, a soul-to-soul connection between equals, between men with the same background. Only in a monocultural setting could it be possible to sustain such an ambition of symmetry and tightness of relationship.

In contrast, Peters suggest that dialogue in a multicultural world should promote the communicative praxis that Jesus represents according to the Gospels. Peters calls this ideal *dissemination* or *broadcasting*. He makes references to the parable of the sower to illustrate this point. The parable advocate a mode of distribution that is democratically indifferent to who may receive the precious seeds. Jesus himself is always speaking to a vast and mixed audience – he is "broadcasting" seeds everywhere, so that it lands on all kinds of ground. Most of the seeds never bear fruit – only a rare few land on receptive soil.

The point is that Jesus leaves the harvest of meaning to the will and capacity of the recipient – stating the following idea of communication: "Those who have ears to hear, let them hear".
Jesus' is *receiver-oriented*: the meaning of the parable is literally the audience's problem. Socrates, as we have seen is *sender-oriented*, the sender bears the sole

responsibility for successful communication. Note that Socrates' spoken words are always accompanied with directions for use – offered by the guiding teacher.

The dangers of Socrates' legacy in tutoring and in portfolio activities in multicultural student groups

It is Socrates' model of communication that is currently dominant in higher education – perhaps in education at all levels. This might be precarious in two ways: By its unrealistic yearning for sameness and symmetry and by the communicative burden it places on the speaker.

Let us consider two relevant educational practices which both are essential to communicative activities in higher education:

A: Tutors feedback on students' work

Brian Street and Mary Lea (1998) pit forward three implicit models that are used in understanding and guiding student writing.

The first is called *the study skills approach*: The students academic performance will bee improved by learning a set of isolated skills such as surface language, grammar, spelling. To help the student be successful in academic communication, the tutor will concentrate on technical and instrumental skills. If the student happens to have a minority language background, the model will put a very heavy burden on the student's ability to *present his meanings* in, technically speaking, a native way. The burden of making meaning is put on the sender of the message – we may add: like Socrates' did. The receiver is the audience and the judge – yet not involved, not responsible for the meaning.

The second model is called *the academic socialisation* approach: The tutor's task is to introduce the student to a new "culture", by guiding the student's orientation to learning and to an adequate understanding of learning tasks. This approach assumes that the academy is a relatively homogenous culture, whose norms and practices simply have to be learnt to provide access to the whole institution. This is an approach that treats the construction and understanding of meaning as acculturation. The tutor

aims at an academic culture where communication is successful only when it is based on sameness of perspective – and eventually mutuality and oneness, a Socratic dream of a homogenous learning culture.

While the first approach destroys multicultural dialogue by putting the whole responsibility for the process of generating meaning on the speaker or writer, the second approach is destructive to multicultural dialogue because it implies a homogenisation of meaning-making. Both these positions can bee seen as an inheritance of the Socratic dialogue.

The third approach, termed *academic literacies*, looks at all academic communication at the level of epistemology and identity. All contributions, including the students, are constituted and take place in contexts of discourse and power. Consequently the student is regarded as a narrator of his own identity. In some sense, the participation in educational dialogues is above all a process of defining, understanding, and contesting (challenge) what is considered relevant knowledge.

In this third perspective, the processes related to acquiring basic skills and academic socialisation will be of secondary interest. Thus, the student ceases to be merely a presenter of knowledge or just a person who is learning to master ”legitimate discourse practises”. The student will be a negotiator and producer of knowledge

If this last model were to become a guiding principle for educational dialogue, it will free the student from the heavy constraints of perfect presentation and from the considerable acculturation pressure which is implied in the Socratic ideal of dialogue.

Experiences of acculturation pressure, examples

A tutor**:** When I guide my students in their writing, I often notice a polite but reserved attitude while I comment on grammar and language and think the student experience some frustration because of all my implicit messages to the student on how to adapt to the academic discourse.

A student: My tutor always tell me what is formally wrong, but never give a hint about what she want, about her conceptions of knowledge .

These experiences are indicative that minority students need more opportunities for real meaning-making in educational settings. And I sometimes feel this very strongly myself.
When I give feedback on the students meaning, or ask directly about the reason for their interest in the subject, I experience that students easily get inspired and are eager to discuss or tell something related to the subject. In cases like this, I think, I manage to change my habitus from being a *director* of the students presentation to being a *receiver* of the students meanings. I take more communicative responsibility, and the student feel more relaxed.
This is probably the most democratic moment in my dialogue with the student – an instance of multicultural dialogue because I put less communicative responsibility on the sender and more on the receiver (on myself at tutor).

B: Portfolio as educational activitity in student groups.

This is a second risk area, where the Socratic ideal of dialogue seems to be guiding interactions. Currently, more and more learning activities take place in student groups without a tutor or a teacher. Our experience at Oslo University College suggests that the pressure to continuously produce student output due to course requirements tends to activate the latent Socratic learning ideology among the students. In self-directed students groups those who do not socialize academically in relatively short time will not feel welcome for very long.

Examples

Most of the time minority students are very hesitant about their participation in dialogue because the student doesn't want to violate the discourse that leads to successful outcomes, even if they don't feel at home.

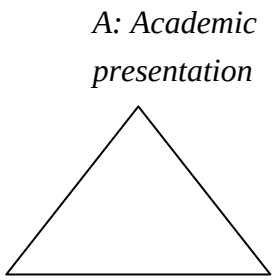
Some years ago an immigrant adult student told me that he felt very uncomfortable with his participation in dialogue exercises regularly found in textbooks for Norwegian language learning. If he was to speak he wanted to express his own meaning, and not represent an unfamiliar point of view.

A student commented recently: Immigrants don't enjoy role playing.

The predominant values of linguistic perfection and discursive acculturation in educational institutions tend to hamper (obstruct) the individual quest for the interpretation and construction of meaning (which is necessary) in a supposedly multicultural learning environment.

Reframing and revitalizing the concept of dialogue

A: academic presentation: Tutors tend to specialises in linguistics.
Dialogue requirement: student learns to transfer knowledge effectively.
B: academic socialisation: Tutors think in sociological terms.
Dialogue requirement: student learns to accomodate to legitimate knowledge.
C: academic negotiation: Tutors take an epistemological approach.
Dialogue requirement: student learns to negotiate and mediate knowledge.



B :Academic socialisation

C: Academic negotiation

Since the establishment of the work-group "Norwegian Academic Language for Linguistic Minorities" at Oslo University College in 1996, we have gradually moved from position A to position B. Academic traditions and administrative guidelines still bind us to an obsolete Socratic recipe (script) for educational dialogue, and we alternate between approach A and B. However, we have increasingly realized that a truly multicultural dialogue requires that we also include C. Accordingly, we suspect that a modified and enriched concept for multicultural dialogue will be situated somewhere in the middle of this triangle of positions.

Peters, John Durham: *Speaking into the air* (1999). The University of Chicago Press.

Lea, Mary and Street, Brian (1998). “Student writing in higher education: An academic literacies approach”, *Studies in Higher Eucation*; Jun98, vol.23 Issue 2.

Øyvind Dahl

The Dynamics of Communication

Invisible threads in the back of our heads.
Threads, which are constantly woven into webs.
Webs of meaning, words unsaid.
Unconscious, invisible, what's in our heads?
What is culture? Who weaves these webs?
Meanings do not jump from heads to heads.
Messages are more than mere words that are said.
Transmitted words with messages unsaid.
Invisible threads in the back of our heads.
Threads, which are constantly woven into webs.

(A poem written by Patsy McGregor based on "Meanings in Madagascar seminar"
by Øyvind Dahl in Tolagnaro, Madagascar 28-31 December 2000)

Communication is a dynamic process. During an act of face-to-face communication the interlocutors are constantly involved in the creation and interpretation of signs (sounds, words, body language, symbols, actions, etc.), which are exchanged and reacted upon according to culture, world view, social context, personality, and identity. Different theories describing the act of communication have been used in literature (Dahl 2001, 2003; Jensen 1998). Some of them focus on the process of communication itself (Gudykunst & Kim 1984). Others emphasise the semiotic aspects of the production of meaning during communication (Fiske 1990). A social constructionist approach to the production of meaning is another modern approach to the understanding of communication (Gergen 1994). A comprehensive theory of the dynamics of communication has probably not yet been conceived.

Each interlocutor's respective cultural background, encompassing their life history, language, world view and interests, is important both for creating messages and for the

interpretation of these messages. The cultural reference frames of the interlocutors are not static but will constantly be modified as a result of the interaction, thus changing the prerequisites for the ongoing communication. Each intervention of the interlocutors is based on the previous intervention; this, in turn, gives directions for the next. Therefore, both the content and the context of the interaction are modified and renewed during the communication, thus influencing the ongoing exchange and interpretation of signs. This makes communication a dynamic experience. In this paper the dynamic act of communication will be discussed further.

Critical Hermeneutics as a Tool for the Study of Intercultural Communication

Recently certain Nordic researchers have brought critical hermeneutic research into the field of intercultural communication (Jensen 1998:36f; Nynäs 2001:80f; Illman 2004: 27f; Svane 2004:139f). It seems to me that the hermeneutic approach has been very fruitful for the study of intercultural communication, and represents an alternative approach to the dominant functionalist trend of several North Americans (Samovar, Porter & Jain 1981; Gudykunst 1998; and others), and the very influential works of some Dutch researchers (Hofstede 1980; Trompenaars 1993). Despite the fact that some excerpts have been published in English (Illman 2003; Nynäs 2003; Jensen 2003), it is regrettable that the Nordic researchers have written their main works in Scandinavian languages. Unless they publish more in English, their influence in the field of intercultural communication in international research risks being minimal.

In her new dissertation the Danish researcher Marita Svane (2004) has introduced the philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer's concept of *fore-meanings* (or *pre-understandings or prejudices* (Gadamer 1975/2000:268)) and the concept of *horizon of understanding* into the analysis of intercultural communication. *Pre-understanding* is the tacit knowledge of Self, Others and Things that exist before entering the process of communication. It is located in the situated individual. Gadamer's concept of *horizon of understanding* sees interpretations as being related to the experiences of the actor.

> The horizon is the range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point (Gadamer 1975/2000: 302).

At the individual level, the horizon of understanding is in a constant state of flux during one's life time. Therefore the past can constantly be interpreted from new

vantage points. Gadamer's concept consequently opens for a very dynamic understanding of communication. When the individual moves into a new context, or meets other people in a communicational setting, the horizon is extended or opened in relation to the new, strange, or foreign horizon. The interlocutors in a communication can negotiate language, meanings, and the accepted reference frames. Gadamer has labelled this process *fusion of horizons* (Gadamer 1975/2000:306). This happens at the individual level and can be explained as *change of understanding*.

In hermeneutics one strives to interpret parts in order to obtain truth about the whole. The well-known *hermeneutic circle* relates to processes of understanding and interpretations. Understanding is created through a process of studying the parts and the whole:

- Parts
- Whole

The parts can only be understood as parts of the whole and the whole can only be understood as composed by the parts. "The repeated return from the whole to the parts, and vice versa, is essential" (Gadamer 1975/2000:190).

In classical hermeneutics the circle is situated outside the interpreter as a relation between part and whole in the interpreted object.

Through the influence of the philosopher Martin Heidegger a radical change has taken place in hermeneutics. The relation between part and totality, and therefore the whole structure of the circle, is moved inside the interpreter himself. The circle is then seen as a relationship between the interpreter and the object. The circle is dependent on the individual, since the understanding of the interpreter is made part of the circle.

After Heidegger, the circle can be named the *circle of understanding*. (Svane 2004:145). Svane has developed a model for interpretation of communication between individuals in developing the three phases of the circle of understanding using a *dialectic approach*. It is presented here in an adapted version: The *thesis* is the whole or the reference frame prior to the communication. The whole is challenged by the *anti-thesis*, consisting of the parts exposed during the communication. This leads to the *synthesis*, which is a new whole in the form of a changed reference frame after the

communication has taken place. The new interpretation creates a new stance for further communication, and so on in an infinite process:

Thesis: Pre-understanding or presuppositions

> This phase is the tacit, "taken-for-given" understanding of Self, one's life, Others and the world. It is the cultural frame of reference of the individual.

Anti-thesis: Understanding or meaning production during the communication

> This phase is the active process of understanding, which is activated when the pre-understanding is insufficient. The pre-understandings are tested, previous experiences are placed in a critical light, new things are explained and reflected upon. Symbols, language, interaction and interpretation are central to what happens in this phase. The investigation of the parts contributes to new wholes. *Production of meaning* takes place.

Synthesis: Post-understanding or reflective phase

> In this phase a new view of whole is gained. A new reference frame and new possibilities for interpretation are created. This phase opens for new interactions or communications, which in turn contributes to the creation of new meanings and understandings.

In Svane's model the interlocutors are analysed using a phenomenological individual-oriented analysis. The model produces a new understanding of *culture* and *identity* as products of dynamic human interaction.

The concept of culture

The phenomenological *concept of culture* (Svane 2004:83f) takes into account the critique of the traditional essentialist functionalist concept of culture. This critique has been voiced by the Norwegian anthropologist Thomas Hylland Eriksen.

> We have been trained to think about culture as a thing that belongs to a people, which has physical borders and which builds on the past. (Eriksen 1993:10).

In line with this conception of culture as a bounded whole, the functionalist research tradition has tried to *predict* how culture influences communication. Focus has been on identifying *culture as a barrier* against a more effective communication (Samovar, Porter & Jain 1981, Brislin 1981, Gudykunst 1998 and others). In these works

practitioners are offered tools to build bridges over the *culture gap* and recipes on in what form they can expect intercultural communication to appear.

In contrast to this understanding of culture, Hylland Eriksen contends that in the globalized world:

> Culture is process and by nature without limits. (Eriksen 1993:19)
> Culture, or cultures, if one prefers, are not indivisible parcels of customs that one has or has not. Humans are a cultural amalgam. (Eriksen 1994:14).

According to these statements, culture is not something that a person has, but something the person is. This phenomenological understanding of culture represents a paradigm shift in relation to classical anthropology (Svane 2004:97). Culture is not in the social surroundings or possessed by a group of people. Culture is embodied and subjective. The person is culture, by incorporating tradition, history, time, and language. Cultures, as they are understood in this phenomenological tradition, are not stable entities with an immutable, homogeneous, original *essence*. Cultures are not islands or boxes in which we can sort human beings. The *essentialist concept of culture* can no longer be upheld in a globalised world. Cultures are hybrids, they are creolised, and embodied in the subject. People interpret their role in society and attach meaning to their lives, and thereby create culture. They communicate with each other by using symbols and language, both verbal language and body language. Therefore, communication is the key to culture, and culture is the key to communication.

The relationship between the *essentialist approach* and the *process-oriented approach* has been discussed in several interesting articles published by a group of Nordic researchers in Stavanger (Haus et al 2003). The meeting between cultures is not a meeting of abstract concepts of culture. The meeting is necessarily a meeting between different individuals of flesh and blood with different frames of interpretation – or frames of reference – with different cultural abstractions in their mind. It is not a meeting of two homogeneous, essentialist cultures defined for a group of people. Cultures never communicate – people do (Dahl 2001:64).

Cultural differences depend on how the participants experience, understand, interpret and are conscious about themselves and one another in the cultural meeting. Cultural differences are therefore experienced subjectively and constructed socially. They do

not exist independent of the experience of the human. Cultural differences are relational and constitute each other. The consequence is that, in the meeting of cultures, culture is created, maintained, or changed. Cultures are to be understood as the ever-changing frame of reference of the individual. “Threads, which are constantly woven into webs” (See introductory poem.)

Culture does not exist independent of the individual, but is always embodied in the individual through interaction with others. The concept of cultures derives its content from the interaction of the individuals, who are made conscious of and define their mutual differences and similarities in the interpersonal encounter. The interpersonal encounter is therefore also an intercultural encounter. In the cultural encounter the individuals ascribe meaning to themselves and their interlocutor or partner. They also deprive themselves and their partners of possible meanings. This means that cultures – embodied in the individuals – interpenetrate each other at the moment they are constituted. Therefore the interpersonal encounter is central to a phenomenological understanding of culture. The concrete culture of a certain individual is created in the interpersonal encounters of the individual.

People will always see themselves and each other – as well as the Other – differently from situation to situation providing they are open to alternative ways of interpreting their existence and not locked into the existing frame of interpretation. Cultural differences and similarities are therefore subjective and dynamic – dependent on time and place and interpreted in relation to the social environment (Svane 2004:381).

According to this view the limits between groups must be defined as subjective, symbolic, dynamic and a result of negotiation, in contrast to the essentialist perspective, where the limits are understood as objective, unique and independent of individuals.

Since culture acquires its ontological locus in the human being, the dynamics of culture must also be seen in reference to human beings. The dynamics of culture are therefore linked to the dual processes of understanding and interpreting individuals. They refer to the individual’s use of the interpretative frame in their everyday life. The dynamics of intercultural encounters are therefore an individually-oriented intercultural dynamic, generated through intersubjective processes of understanding between individuals (Svane 2004:385).

Culture in this phenomenological understanding is an interpretation of the world. It does not necessarily keep members of a community together, since culture is not a homogeneous and integrated frame of interpretation. It can be an ambiguous, fragmented, and adversative frame of interpretation. The concept of culture cannot explain what keeps a community together. It necessitates further studies of the concept of identity and the person in relation to society. Individuals in social interaction actively create culture. Meaning production is a process of creation or recreation in interaction with others. The result is change of culture.

The concept of identity

Parallel to the discussion above on the concept of culture, the phenomenological *concept of identity* is not a given structure that exists in itself, but a process; a social construction that is constantly modified and changed (Svane 2004:213). Both individual personal identity and collective group identity are socially constructed in dialogical processes and are social identities.

> Social identity is our understanding of who we are and who other people are, and, reciprocally, other people's understanding of themselves and of others (which includes us). Social identity, is, therefore, no more essential than meaning; it too is the product of agreement and disagreement, it too is negotiable. (Jenkins 1996:5).

Identity is a relational concept. It belongs to specific local relations between specific persons. Identity can be understood as a narrative created in the meeting between a narrator and a listener, where the narrator tends to create consistency between the different narratives about him/herself.

Cultural identity is formed through experiences from childhood, contact with parents, peers, others, education; and is unceasing, since people living in a society constantly receive and adopt new influences through communication with others. With this constructivist perspective (Berger & Luckmann 1966) there is a general understanding that cultural identity is a form of social identity constructed in relation to other people in a given period of time (Jensen 2003:11).

> Cultural identity is a core aspect of this welter of phenomena that confront us. The term refers to a social identity that is based on a specific cultural configuration of a conscious nature. History, language and race are all possible bases for Cultural identity and they are all socially constructed realities. (Friedman 1994:238).

A further point can be made on cultural identity, however. Stuart Hall argues that a subject in complex societies may be a proponent of *multiple identities*, even *contradictory identities*:

> Identity becomes a moveable feast formed and transformed continuously in relation to the ways we are represented or addressed in the cultural systems which surrounds us…Within us are contradictory identities pulling in different directions, so that our identifications are continuously being shifted about (Hall et al. 1992:277).

According to Hall the reason why we see ourselves as coherent persons is the narratives we construct about ourselves: "If we feel we have a unified identity from birth to death, it is only because we construct a comforting story or 'narrative of the self' about ourselves" (Hall et al. :277). Multiple identities or contradictory identities are very relevant in the study of intercultural communication because the concept provides us with an explanation for why certain topics in a conversation actualise different identities.

Contribution of semiotics

Language can be understood as a system of signs. The *sign* represents something beyond itself, the referent. The referent is not necessarily a concrete object, it may also be an abstract or another sign. C. S. Peirce, who is commonly regarded as the founder of the American tradition of semiotics, widened the understanding of the sign when he stated:

> A sign is something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity. It addresses somebody, that is, creates in the mind of that person an equivalent sign, or perhaps a more developed sign. The sign which it creates I

> call the *interpretant* of the first sign. The sign stands for something, *its object*. (In Fiske, 1990:42)

In Peirce's language "the *interpretant*" is not the user of the sign, "the interpreter", but a mental concept, "a new sign", produced by the sign and the user's experience of the object. It is an interpretation of the first sign, produced by the help of other signs. Where Peirce contends that "the sign creates in the mind of that person an equivalent sign", I would, in line with what has been said above, prefer to say that "the person creates in his or her mind an equivalent sign". Or, to develop it further in the direction of the relational theory of human meaning: "the person in relationship to others creates in his or her mind an equivalent sign", because the sign cannot by itself create meaning. The creation of meaning is always done by a person in relationships with others in social communication, as has been pointed out by Gergen (1994).

Communication in the semiotic sense does not mean "sending messages", as is often said about the process of communication. Communication is a social and mutual "act of sharing"; it refers to the sharing of concepts, mediated by the use of signs. Dynamic communication is, according to this school, about negotiating meanings and how people produce (not merely transmit) meanings. Or, to use a metaphor, human communication is social – it is about meetings, not mail-boxes.

The school of semiotics often applies the analogy of a "text" or a "message". The message or text is a construction of signs that, through interaction with the receivers, produce meanings. The sender, defined as transmitter of the message, declines in importance. The emphasis shifts to the text and how it is "read". When the interpreter (or reader) reads the text (the message), he or she assigns meaning to it in relation to the reactions of other people and with reference to his or her cultural reference frame, i.e. experience and context. The embodied meaning attached to the sign by the individual (the interpreter) is therefore produced by the interpreter in interaction with others, and by taking into account their cultural experience and context. Reading involves negotiation with the text – in context – as the reader brings aspects of his or her cultural experience to bear upon the codes or signs that make up the text or message. Obviously readers with different social experiences or with different cultural backgrounds may find different meanings in the same text (Fiske, 1990:3).

Since the focus in this aspect is not on the process of transmission, but on the production of meaning, the semiotic school will not claim that a communication will experience a breakdown when the interlocutors ascribe different meanings to a certain event. On the contrary, such behaviour must be expected since different interlocutors have different social and cultural backgrounds. Their interpretation is based on different cultural reference frames, different social experiences, and different cognitive universes of signs and meaning.

Meaning is the way individuals make sense of their world. Meaning as it is applied in this paper is, therefore, meaning to a person – it is *embodied* (Lakoff & Johnson 1980:196). However, individuals can only make sense of their world in relation with others (Gergen 1994:264). It is through social relationships that individuals learn to assign approximately the same meaning to signs: objects, words, actions, and events. The study of the meaning of signs (semiotics) is therefore central to the study of communication. And meanings are not created in a vacuum; without others, meanings cannot be settled once and for all. Meanings are always in process, always being created and recreated (negotiated) by socially-situated readers. And, as pointed out by Hall (1976), without context, there is no text.

The role of language

Obviously *language* is central as a system of signs. The philosopher of language Ludvig Wittgenstein introduced the notion of *language-game*. Language-game [*Sprachspiel*] is a device to refer to countless activities in which language is used, such as "giving orders, and obeying them", "describing the appearance of an object, or giving its measurements", "reporting an event", "play-acting", etc. (Wittgenstein 2001:23). Language-game is about using signs in a way that makes sense. The sign or message is given meaning (interpreted) from the context and the way it is used. A word's meaning is the way it is used in the language.

We are born into a world of language, we live in language, and practise language. The human being *is* his language (Svane 2001:188). The collective community of interpretation is also a collective community of language. To understand the world is also to understand language. Language has an ability to transcend both time, space, and the social dimension in the given Here and Now (Berger & Luckmann 1996). It is

this ability to transcend the horizons of the Other that creates opportunities for intersubjective understanding in the intercultural encounter where the One meets the Other with different cultural and linguistic universes of meanings and symbols. And it is this transcendent ability of language that makes the *fusion of horizons* possible across the intercultural encounter.

To *put oneself in the horizon of understanding of the Other* has three important corollaries:

1. Our own horizon of understanding must not be used as a yardstick for the Other. We must try to understand the Other on his/her own terms.
2. We cannot fail to take into account our own horizon. We do not possess other reference frames than those we have acquired throughout our lifetime.
3. Our pre-understandings or presuppositions are challenged in the interaction with the Other. Whether this will lead to new insights or simply result in the entrenchment of former views is often contingent on the openness or not of the mind.

An improvement of communication, in the sense of correct interpretation of the other participant, can only be obtained when people learn each other's codes of language and cultural backgrounds, and consequently improve their communicative competence. At least such training may enhance a better understanding of why the Other acts and thinks as he or she does. An important asset will be the ability to *empathise* – the ability to put oneself in the place of the Other.

A dynamic hermeneutic approach to intercultural communication

Elements of what has been said above about culture, identity, semiotics, and language will now be used in presenting a dynamic hermeneutic model of communication. This follows the dialectic scheme of Marita Svane (2004) presented at the beginning of this paper, and comprises three phases:

1. Thesis: The phase of pre-understanding or presuppositions
2. Anti-thesis: The phase of communication and meaning production
3. Synthesis: The phase of post-understanding and reflection

Phase 1. Pre-understanding or presuppositions of the two interlocutors

Each of the interlocutors brings with them a reservoir of basic pre-understanding on such elements as space, body, time, world view, social relations and language. Much of this knowledge is tacit, unconscious understanding: "threads in the back of our heads" (See poem at the beginning of this paper). Basic concepts are understandings about Self, Others, life, values, norms, and the world. They make up the individual's frame of reference or frame of interpretation. The body links the person to the world by creating access to the world. The body makes experience and production of meaning possible.

Pre-understanding also embraces tradition and language as carriers of the "webs of meaning" of the culture. The human being is his/her history, his/her time, his/her tradition, his/her social relationship, and his/her language. Life experience is constituted by the narratives he or she makes about his/her life. Pre-understanding therefore represents the culture of the individual. It explains, legitimates, integrates, and maintains interpretations of the actual situation, project or action.

Through interacting in a social community, the individual acquires an intersubjective pre-understanding of his or her material, social and institutional context explicated by his or her language. This understanding also makes up the basis for interpretation of future actions and interactions. Cultural assumptions also involve expectations of possible outcomes in future situations of communication.

Pre-understanding also encompasses an understanding of the concrete situation and the concrete project, task or activity in which the person takes part.

The whole reservoir of pre-understanding is the *horizon of understanding* of the individual in hermeneutic terms (Gadamer1975/2000). It is a prerequisite for communication.

Phase 2. Communication and meaning production

In this phase the interlocutors enter a situation that involves communication. It is an encounter in space by means of either technical devices, face-to-face communication, a common action, or another relationship that brings the *horizons of understanding* in contact with each other. This is the exciting dynamic phase of intercultural or interpersonal communication.

Two potential courses are possible:

1. Closed course of communication:

The partners do not open for intersubjective production of meaning. Instead they tend to stick to their own former stereotypes. Stereotypes are simple but necessary categorisations of people (Dahl, 1995; 1999). In this closed course of communication only the items that contribute to confirming former stereotypes about the Other are picked up from the meeting of horizons. In this case the stereotypes become frozen stereotypes – or *prejudices* (Dahl 2001: 27) that can act as self-fulfilling prophecies.

Without search for understanding, pre-understanding tends to become rigid and immutable, and the individual may become locked into closed structures of meanings. In this way *gaps of culture* can arise implying:

- a closed subjective world view,
- closed sequences of actions,
- closed institutions,
- closed roles,
- closed activities and tasks.

The result is often distrust and suspicion, which can develop into ethnocentrism, and even racism and violence.

2. Open course of communication:

In this case the interlocutors enter into an intersubjective I – You relation that opens for new production of meaning. The partners open up their respective *horizon of understanding*. This openness means that prior understandings or stereotypes are put aside. Instead, pre-understandings and prejudices or stereotypes are played off against one another through actions, speech, and reflection to test the validity of culturally legitimate interpretations. Prior understandings or pre-understandings are challenged and confronted with other understandings or interpretations. The conscious action of understanding opens for a process whereby the individual attempts to search for valid understanding together with the Other. It is an active testing process of each partner's subjective pre-understandings.

The simultaneity of interaction and conversation has as a function to

- make visible the similarities and differences of the individual's understanding of culture and identity
- create common reference points in time and space here and now. Simultaneity makes visible differences in conceptions and interpretations.
- negotiate the use of symbols, language, norms and values, use of space and material; therefore the creation of meaning and identity, and a system of relevance about things, people and relations, activities, and tasks.

The interlocutors try to penetrate each other's structures of meaning. This is done by interpreting signs and messages – in the semiotic sense – communicated both verbally and non-verbally. New *production of meaning* is then possible. Since meaning is relational and socially constructed, the communication opens for a *fusion of horizons* (Gadamer1975/2000:306), or common production of meanings. Gadamer explains the 'method' of understanding by qualifying it as an art:

> The 'method' of understanding will be concerned equally with what is common, by comparison, and with what is unique, by intuition; it will be both comparative and divinatory. But in both respects it remains 'art,' because it cannot be turned into a mechanical application of rules. The divinatory remains indispensable. (Gadamer 1975/2000:190).

Signs and meanings expressed in language are interpreted and negotiated; new meanings are attached to former and new signs, words or actions. Interactive individual-oriented processes may take place and open for social and cultural changes. Also the use of artefacts contributes to the production of meaning: meanings are created from the use of objects.

Similarities and differences between Self and the Other are reflected on and made explicit by interaction. Roles and relations relating to projects, tasks and activities are tested. New similarities and differences are experienced and created.

Through this relationship, *new identity* is created as well as conscious conceptions about Self, the Other and the world, which are made relevant in the situation. These notions, meanings and identities are played off in a language-game (Wittgenstein 2001). The interlocutors constitute each other in the encounter, both culturally, linguistically and by creating new identities. The establishment of identities also

defines the borders between Self, Other and the world. What unifies, what separates and therefore what is common and what is individual is defined. “I”, “you”, “we”, “it” and “they” are identified.

Creation of identity makes the world more predictable and reduces uncertainty. It makes it possible to make plans for the future; to evaluate, decide and act in relation to future situations. Culture and identity acquire content and form in the encounter and are in this way socially constructed. The local creolised culture, a new identity and language are established and negotiated through the relationship.

Language - both the use of language and language actions - makes new experience, comprehension and communication possible, since it articulates subjective meanings. Within the same linguistic community of interpretation, language makes the produced meanings intersubjectively understandable. Context, previous experience, and relations to other human beings may contribute to the production of meaning. Language and culture are, as we all know, closely interwoven.

If the interlocutors do not share the same formal language, they tend to find a common informal language: body language, body signs, simple utterances that can be interpreted by the other. All human beings have languages that enable them to search for a common platform of signs and messages through which meanings can be produced. A negotiation of meanings may take place.

Phase 3. Post-understanding and reflection
After the encounter, the post-understanding or reflective phase represents a new pre-understanding about situation, relation, task, project, etc. The change of culture that is brought about is the result of continuous dynamics of intercultural communication.

The frame of interpretation, or frame of reference is changed, and a new freedom to act is created. New meanings are generated that create:

- new possibilities for interpretation and understanding,
- new choices and new options for actions,
- new possibilities for making decisions,
- new roles, habits, customs, norms and values,
- new ways of combining objects, resources, and activities

Experience of the creativity of openness in itself creates openness for further *fusions of horizons* (Gadamer 1975/2000:306). There is a willingness to accept uncertainty, to reduce distances, and accept experiments. The experience of intercultural communication provides the interlocutors with the ability to evaluate what is nearby and available, what is usable, what is accessible, what is interesting, what is valuable, and what is relevant.

The *fusion of horizons* may create new common signs and symbols, and influence language, use of language, world views, understanding of identity, understanding of situation: in short, the reference frames of the individuals. It may enhance new solutions and recommendations also in the larger community.

The communication may have revealed different interpretations of the same sign or event. We do not characterise this situation as a breakdown of communication, however, as would have been the tendency of the functionalists. Instead, in accordance with the semiotic tradition, we say that different interpretations and misunderstandings are not necessarily negative. On the contrary, if the communicators are aware of a lack of understanding and possible misunderstandings, these situations may represent a source of increased value – what I call "*golden moments*" of potential new discoveries! (Dahl 2003). If the individuals are aware of it, confusion, lack of understanding and even misunderstandings can be considered as new starting points for new questions, a new exchange of signs, new negotiations and new meanings! The most fascinating aspects of intercultural communication are those encounters between people with different reference frames that, each from their own background, can contribute to new insights!

The newly created meanings can be spread in the greater social network through other intersubjective processes in different interactions. A local frame of interpretation that is found culturally valid on a wider scale may thus be extended in new dyadic interactions. Communication can become the bridge between different human beings. A multitude of local understandings of reality and local world views can be the result. The reference frame of the collective may change and become more heterogeneous, ambiguous, and fragmented. The process contributes to openness for new interpretations, an experience that can legitimate changes for future generations or newcomers in the community/fellowship

Cultural dynamics

In a previous publication I have defined intercultural communication in this way:

> Intercultural communication is a process that implies exchange of and interpretation of signs between persons *who identify themselves* as representatives of cultural communities so different from each other that their ascription of meaning is influenced by it. (Dahl 2001:64).

The persons *who identify themselves* in relation to each other therefore provide a starting point for the meeting between individuals (Illman 2004:53). All people are different and live their different reference frames. Therefore also identity – a relational term - has been in focus here. Culture, in this phenomenological sense, is understood as an individual frame of reference that is part of the individual's pre-understanding. Through interpersonal encounters these frames of reference are put into play, challenged and changed. Even when people adhere to different pre-understandings, there will always be contact points since people possess important conceptions in common. The hermeneutic possibility is to "recognize each other as human beings" (Nynäs 2001:307,324).

In communication, both culture and identity are at stake. In a face-to-face communication the roles of communicator and respondent shift every second and every minute; what is said is based on presuppositions that are in a state of flux during the conversation. The fusion of horizons is instantaneous and spontaneous. In contrast to the functionalist approach, the hermeneutic approach contends that the knowledge of intersubjective dynamic intercultural communication cannot be put into a matrix to be used to predict or control communication.

Culture is not changed simultaneously among the members of a society. Culture change is a process that takes place in the phase of understanding and meaning production, and manifests itself in the post-understanding phase in different ways and in different periods among different individuals depending on their situation, context and purpose. Cultures are therefore fragmented, ambiguous, and complex reference frames with potential tensions between rival worlds of meaning. The common aspects of cultures are the result of numerous communications and negotiations within society between different human beings.

Cultural dynamics is a process of interpretation of the individual in social interaction. Culture in the hermeneutic sense is understood as a frame of interpretation that is always challenged and always in the midst of a process of change; one that cannot be separated from the individual and the local context where the interpretations are created. Culture – "invisible threads in the back of our heads" – is dynamic and not static: "These threads are constantly woven into webs". "Who weaves these webs?" (See introductory poem).

References

Berger, Peter & Luckmann, Thomas (1966): *The social construction of reality. A treatise in the sociology of knowledge.* London: Penguin Books.

Brislin, Richard (1981): *Cross-cultural encounters. Face to face interaction*. Elmsford, NY: Pergamon.

Dahl, Øyvind (1995) "The Use of Stereotypes in Intercultural Communication." *Essays on culture and communication. Language and cultural contact (Sprog og kulturmøde) No. 10.*. Center for Languages and Intercultural Studies (CSIS), Aalborg: Aalborg University. (p. 9-36).

Dahl, Øyvind (1999) *Meanings in Madagascar. Cases of intercultural communication.* Westport CT: Bergin & Garvey. Greenwood Publishing Group.

Dahl, Øyvind (2001): *Møter mellom mennesker. Interkulturell kommunikasjon*. Oslo: Gyldendal.

Dahl, Øyvind (2003): "Models of communication and the golden moment of misunderstanding". In Holm, N.G. & J. Quiroz-Schauman (Eds.). *Intercultural communication – past and future*. Selected papers presented at the 7th Nordic Symposium for Intercultural Communication in Turku/Åbo, 2000. Turku: Åbo Akademi/Fortbildingscentalen. (p. 12 – 22).

Eriksen, Thomas H. (1993): *Kulturterrorismen: Et oppgjør med tanken om kulturell renhet*. Oslo: Spartacus.

Eriksen, Thomas H. (1994): *Kulturelle veikryss. Essays om kreolisering*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.

Fiske, John (1990): *Introduction to communication studies.* 2. ed. London: Routledge

Friedman, Jonathan (1994): *Cultural Identity and Global Process*. London: Sage.

Gadamer, Hans-Georg (1975/2000). *Truth and Method*, 2nd ed. New York: Continuum.

Geertz, Clifford (1973): *The interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books.

Gergen, Kenneth J. (1994): Realities and relationships. Soundings in social construction. *Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.*

Gudykunst, William B. & Young Y. Kim (1984). *Communicating with Strangers. An Approach to Intercultural Communication*. New York: Random House.

Gudykunst, William B. (1998): Bridging differences. Effective intergroup communication. *3. utg. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.*

Hall, Edward T. (1976). *Beyond culture*. New York: Doubleday.

Hall, Stuart, Held, David & McGrew, Tony (eds.) (1992): Modernity and its futures. *London: Polity Press, Open University.*

Haus, Sigurd, Skeie, G. & Johannessen, Ø.L. (2003): *Kulturformidling fra internasjonale arenaer. Et bidrag til meningsutveksling om kultur.* Senter for kulturstudier, Norges Forskningsråd. Kristiansand: Høyskoleforlaget

Hofstede, Geert (1980): *Culture's consequences. International differences in work-related values.* London: Sage.

Illman, Ruth (2004): *Gränser och gränsöverskridanden. Skildrade erfarenheter av kulturella möten i internationellt projektarbete.* Åbo/Turku: Åbo Akademis förlag.

Illman, Ruth (2003): "The quest for meaning. Cultural stereotypes in the perspective of comparative religion. ". In Holm, N.G. & J. Quiroz-Schauman (Eds.). *Intercultural communication – past and future*. Selected papers presented at the 7th Nordic Symposium for Intercultural Communication in Turku/Åbo, 2000. Turku: Åbo Akademi/Fortbildingscentalen. (p. 108–127).

Jenkins, Richard (1996): *Social identity.* London: Routledge

Jensen, Iben (1998): *Interkulturel kommunikation i komplekse samfund.* Roskilde: Roskilde Universitetsforlag.

Jensen, Iben (2003): "The practice of intercultural communication – reflections for professionals in cultural meetings". *The Electronic Journal of Intercultural Communication.* (Published by Nordic Network of Intercultural Communication, NIC). www.immi.se/intercultural/nr 6.

Lakoff, George & Johnson, Mark (1980). *Metaphores we live by*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Nynäs, Peter (2001): *Bakom Guds rygg. En hermeneutisk ansats till interkulturell kommunikation och förståelse i industriella projekt.* Turku/Åbo: Åbo Akademis förlag.

Nynäs, Peter (2003): Estrangement redefined – A hermenutic approach. ". In Holm, N.G. & J. Quiroz-Schauman (Eds.). *Intercultural communication – past and future*. Selected papers presented at the 7th Nordic Symposium for Intercultural Communication in Turku/Åbo, 2000. Turku: Åbo Akademi/Fortbildingscentalen. (p. 128–139).

Samovar, Larry A., Porter, Richard E. & Jain, N. (1981): *Understanding intercultural communication.* Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Svane, Marita (2004): *Interkulturel Dynamik i Kulturmødet. En Fænomenologisk Individorienteret Analyse og Forståelse*. Aalborg: Aalborg Universitet.

Trompenaars, Fons (1993): *Riding the waves of culture. Understanding cultural diversity in business.* London: Nicolas Brealey.

Wittgenstein, Ludvig (2001): *Philosphical Investigations*. Third edition.
Oxford/Malden: Blackwell

Elisabeth Eide

Down there and up here. To see the world from another place.

"For it is often the way we look at other people that imprisons them within their own narrowest allegiances. And it is also the way we look at them that may set them free."

Amin Maalou

On Identity

1. A literary prelude

First: I think the fictional literature of this world is underestimated in dialogues concerning cross-cultural encounters, post-colonial experiences, multiculturalism or whichever words we apply to describe what joins us here. To illustrate my title, I would like to turn your attention to the Indonesian writer Pramoedya Ananta Toer, translated into Norwegian and 34 other languages. He has spent seventeen years in prison, and an equal amount in various degrees of house arrest. His most important work is called the Buru Quartet, in which he describes colonial Indonesia at the former turn of the century. His main character is Minke, a young man who – due to his brilliancy – is allowed to study in the finest colonial schools and then becomes a prominent oppositional, as a journalist and editor. Through the eyes of Minke we are allowed to learn this: The liberal colonial teachers convey the ideals from the time of Enlightenment (freedom and equality of all individuals) to him – whereby he discovers that these ideas are not practiced in the colonial society in which he lives. This duality is prominent in his books, and refers to a double standard that is visible also in today's world, especially in circumstances of war, where the Other (i.e. the enemy and people sympathising with him/her) is easily devalued.

Toer, especially in the first three volumes of the Quartet, has a very good hand

with describing women – not least Nijai Ontosoroh, a concubine belonging to a Dutch businessman. She is described not so much as a victim, rather as a very strong person who knows how to survive albeit oppressing circumstances – and even helps Minke on his difficult path to prominence.

In the fourth volume of the Buru Quartet the main character is no longer Minke, but Pangemanann, an Indonesian Police officer who works for the colonial power. He is ordered to supply intelligence about subversive persons, among them Minke, and we learn about his tormented consciousness as he realises that his work destroys other people.

This tetralogy was written by Toer during the many years when he was imprisoned in Buru island, far away from Java. For the first five years he was not even allowed pen and paper. As a way of telling his story, he gathered 14 of his prison mates every evening to tell the story later to be printed in four volumes. He must have done it to preserve his memory. Before being imprisoned, he witnessed Suharto's soldiers destroying his entire library and all his files, an immense amount of research that he had conducted to be able to write about these colonial times. After an unknown number of petitions, he was allowed a typewriter, and his manuscripts were smuggled from the island by a German priest. The story made an impact: One disappeared in the jungle: I wanted to be Minke!

What amazes me and many other readers is that Toer, being imprisoned and mistreated, seeing prisoners die in large numbers around him, was at the same time able to write a novel in which he includes the perspective of the oppressor, impersonated by the colonial servant Pangemanann: A colonist with a soul (Mineke Schipper 1999). In an interview he told me that he does not hate his prison guards. "For me, all the prisoners were more cultivated than the ones who put me in prison. Therefore I consider everything Suharto's people did to me as an honour", he said.

This story may serve as proof of the profundity of a writer's exploration of the Self and the Other. Toer personally experienced how it was to be looked at as the bothersome Other, someone to devalue, to ship away, an expendable human being. He experienced a situation with a large potential for hatred. But his humanity, empathy and generosity stretches across the constructed divides, and by his books I have learnt more about the mechanisms of colonialism than by a lot of non-fictional literature. And I think in our field, the understanding of colonialism's part of history is highly important, because

we are still struggling with some of the economic, social and mental hierarchies of that time.

2. Gates to understanding media Othering

In my research on media's representation of cross-cultural encounters, I have drawn upon several directions of research, trying to link the representation of internal others (minorities) to the repr. of external others:

a) One is the Orientalism critique (literature and media), initiated by the late Edward Said, a very rich material from which to discover how to see the world literature from another place; especially the colonized peoples places. It may also be applied on media representation, as he himself also did in Covering Islam. Said opened up a field of possible readings, possible to gather under the concept of Contrapuntal reading. Contrapuntal reading means to study for example a literary work both from the side of the national contemporaries of the creator (for example Jane Austen's British readers) – and from the marginalized positions: the colonial subjects. In one of Said's last interviews he addressed what he called the 'battle for representation', which fundamentally has to do with the right of people to represent themselves as individuals or groups, or be represented in a perspective of humanity based on fundamental human rights and

values. But as he said: In this world what matters is: Represent and rule – thus touching upon the connections between knowledge and media power. This becomes even more important in a 'mediated society'. In journalism this is a daily battle, and the mapping of journalistic representation of various groups – marginalized or not – is an important field of study.

b) Said touches upon the Public sphere and the right to speak. The public sphere will often be dominated by the powerful, but precisely therefore we have long witnessed the growth of "Counter-spheres" and people exercising their right to 'talk back'. More often lately this road is open to many, due to the electronic revolution. On the other hand, precisely since this revolution leads to an enormous excess of information, a new question, put forward by Le Monde-Diplomatique-editor Ignacio Ramonet, is who has the right to be heard. (Spivak 1988, Ramonet 1999). This is linked up with the concept of subalternity:

originally a notion used for low-rank officers, today, often used as a concept to describe marginalized groups.
On the other hand the perspective of overcoming the either-or, we-them dichotomy, researchers point to Third Space-modalities where groups traditionally segregated by media and society find grounds on which they may be speaking together and develop symmetrical relations. (Shohat & Stam 1994, Bhabha 1989): An ideal world, may be unattainable, but worth striving for.

c) A third gate to exploring media is of course critical discourse analysis:
Text seen as related to the exercise of power. In his works Norman Fairclough formulates a number of ways of representation – and also introduces critique when it comes to how discourses in one field get contaminated by another: one of his examples being how business language penetrates academic language. His analysis of a ladder from absence to foreground is of good help in analyzing media texts. As an example mentioned, the historical background of many events is largely absent in the media.

d) A thorough media analysis of media in a trans-national society may also be linked with concepts like Othering and marginalization, examining the perspective of the powerful and on the other hand excluded experiences, i.e. processes of marginalization, by which some experiences are considered as unimportant and/or peripheral
The Subaltern is a concept applied in connection to the possibilities of marginalized people, like indigenous groups, minorities, the poor, women etc. have to let their views and needs be known. As such it is useful. And it is also useful as a way of seeing the incompleteness of history writing. As the media are among the most important sources of history, their representation of oppressed and marginalized groups is of major importance. This representation may be spoken of in terms of Others and Othering.

Subalternity

May be defined as follows:

- Inferior rank (subject to hegemony), as caste, class, ethnicity, gender, etc.
- A position from which to view and/or rewrite history: as ”Subaltern

Studies Group" in India has been doing (Ranajit Guha, Partha Chatterjee etc);

- A position often ignored or marginalised
- A position from where one may talk back, demonstrating the subversive potential of marginality
- In the media: An option for a reporter or a film-maker

The Language and the Real

In representation the power of language is of great importance. In media we often witness the retreat of language from the real or the appropriation of language for a purpose; that is, the way language may operate to make us accept certain actions and politics. As when the events of war in and around Falluja by the militaries is called a 'clean-up operation' and some of the media uncritically integrate this military way of speaking. Which perspectives are then not included? And what is presupposed of an audience for whom this kind of language is applied?

The examples I use also demonstrate these linguistic features. They are partly from a new research project, and partly from my own doctoral thesis, in which I examined both India representation (historically) and minority representation (contemporary) in parts of the Norwegian press.

3. Othering and media representation: The case of A-magasinet

What is this Other – Othering – process?

In imperial/colonial discourses these words have been terms in which the colonized subject gains a sense of his/her identity as somehow 'other', dependent, framing the place from which he/she is allowed to see the world.

The subjectivity of the colonized is continually located in the gaze of the imperial Other, as are today's marginalised peoples and groups. And Othering is a way by which imperial discourse creates its 'others' (Spivak 1988) – the Other being the excluded or 'mastered' subject created by the discourse of power. In other words: Othering is also a discursive process.

Spontaneously we may say that we enter the process of othering every day, if we define it in a less politicized way, since we become ourselves by distinction. I am not you: 'We' differ from 'them'. But to focus solely on what differs groups, nations, parts of the world, is synonymous to adhering to a policy of difference, which at this stage in Europe is fundamentally dangerous. After the

killing of the filmmaker Theo van Gogh an image has been created of this being something that a Non-European they could do, but not the All-European we. There has been little discussion on why it occurs that some migrants become more conservative in their religious practices, in certain cases extreme. A provocative question: Is the assassin of Theo van Gogh also a product of European culture?

Media is one arena on which difference is performed, celebrated, while universality, what unites us, across perceived or real differences, is often underplayed. Difference is more interesting – the way 'they' differ from us, said one of the journalists I interviewed during my research. But a constant feeding of differences from the media to various audiences, may in today's world contribute to hatred and lack of understanding.

In my research I have mapped various ways of media othering in one particular weekend supplement to a large Norwegian daily (Eide 2002). I found a tradition of hierarchical othering, in which India and Indians were seen as inferior, as culturally backward, as people who needed 'western upbringing'.

"Does India possess the necessary space, resources and intellectual capacity to give her population a standard of living according to the demands of our time?"

(India under the banner of development, 1968)

"They are like an extended family of sorts. One would have to search at length to find the likes of these kind and nice children – they actually deserve a chance"

(Christmas in the slums, 1972)

The first passage demonstrates this tendency by doubting the Indian ability to develop, and further representations of Norwegian missionaries – and other European/Western do-gooders – confirm this tendency. The second one shows compassion for the "kind and nice" ones, thus underlining a definition of "worthy victims".

This kind of representation takes many other shapes, but let us rather look at some alternative ways of representing the non-Western Other, showing that there exists indeed a potential for non-hierarchy in the press – even if these examples in numbers were quite limited.

"Here small feet stamp the ground and impressive roars are heard. For a young Indian gentleman is just as hostile to cleanliness as his Norwegian brother in the same age group."

(No pampering, but possibilities for at better future, 1965)

In this passage, the universality of some human experience is underlined, and in the one below a respect for India's achievement is expressed by the journalist, who is reflecting confronted with the country's industrial revolution, hampered by colonial, in full progress in the 1960s.

"Besides, the Indians produce about 70 000 cars per year as compared to 16 500 in 1950. […] When one takes into consideration that the Indians had to learn the whole production technique from scratch, one is not likely to blame them for having wasted their time."

(India under the banner of development, 1968)

Two feature stories in the weekend supplement A-magasinet were based on one Norwegian artist and his experience from a longer stay in India. The reporter lets him speak of his experiences at length, and his photos illustrate the article.

"[the Indians] create something all the time. They make small things in clay, they paint and decorate. Where is the Norwegian housewife who expresses her feelings by painting the walls? No, she uses a roll when she paints."

(An artist's voyage of discovery, 1969)

"at home [Norway] the taste is different. […] Do we really know anything at all about Indian film in our part of the world? […] We wonder whether Indian film could ever lave an impression in our remote country. Our seclusion from foreign cultures is probably too deep-rooted."

(The giant among the world's film nations, 1981)

This last passage is part of a series in which the reporter is out to discover "Another India", exploring film, street jugglers and other cultural features. It was probably a result of a discussion in the editorial room in which a critique of negative representation focusing very much on misery was presented, in the very late 1970s. The result was more focus on other matters, culture, religion and wildlife.

One last example may illustrate the "Third Space" thinking, in that it highlights cultural exchange and challenges the notion of cultural purity:

"I sit here now speaking about pure Indian art and the time of the Mohamedan invasion, says Guttormsgaard – but in practice there has always, at all times, been an exchange in progress between Greeks, Indians, Chinese. We do not talk about pure Norwegian art!"

(An artist's voyage of discovery, 1969)

No, we do not speak of pure Norwegian art. And may be art is the area in which one finds more of an appreciation for the universal, at least for the time being.
One part of the art which is ambiguous in this respect, is satire. We are living in a dangerous world, and polarization may easily lead to hate. I had a glance at Al Jazeera's home page and was especially intrigued to observe the collections of satirical cartoons from various newspapers in the Middle East, cartoons which very often are focusing the way they see the double standards of the West.
Here are just a few examples of what I found:

Unfortunately not reproducible here.

In our times, when several of the European nations are involved in acts of war in Muslim countries, I believe this is something we need to know, to learn about. This little series may be just one small visual example of the way the world is being seen from elsewhere – our elsewhere. It is not meant as propaganda, but as a visualization of the way reality is perceived by some powerful news media that we do not so much encounter in our daily lives in Northern Europe.

4. Discourse and language.

But let us move away from these images so full of meaning – some of which might have been printed here, some that might not – and turn to words and their discursive impact. One of discourse analytic Norman Faircloughs many recommendations, is that while studying text, or media for that matter, one should not only register what is there, but also what is missing: The 'not-theres'. To map this may seem increasingly difficult, since we are

bombarded with media impressions from before we leave the bed in the morning, until we eventually doze off with the remote control in one hand, instead of finding our way back to bed. This enormous increase in media digestion may make it harder to realize what we miss, what is unseen or unheard of. Fairclough's work helps to construct a kind of ladder of visibility in media texts, which may lead to more understanding of the way media function in a globalized world.

The ladder includes four steps: Absence, Presupposed, Backgrounded, Foregrounded, and may be applied as one of several tools of analysis.

Today I am busy with another research project – in which we are trying to map the way media over a hundred year period has represented its significant Others, that is, ethnic minorities – and the so-called non-western world (I am well aware of our crisis of definition, as Stuart Hall expresses it: The West is everywhere, and so is the non-west).

War makes up for a large part of the international coverage. And in 1902, the focus of the Norwegian press was on the Boer war in South Africa. One remarkable feature of the coverage, is the lack of Africans, the people who were always there.

Their absence can be likened to what is sometimes called symbolic annihilation. This may be explained by the context into which these texts occur: Norway is a young nation fighting for her independence (1905). It is probably tacitly presupposed that it is easier for Norwegian audiences to identify with people of European origin than with 'natives' of South Africa. The coverage also in part shows that the homely debate on peace versus war is more important than what goes on 'down there'. This is shown through the way the war coverage often is overshadowed by homely debates in general, between the different political directions at the time,

Backgrounded in the coverage, at least the part we have mapped, is the context of the war, its roots and explanations, and – as in the wars of today, fighters and their weapons are in the foreground, while the civilians often are backgrounded.

Let us shift to 1919, again Egypt, this time in turmoil, and another text from our own days.

"The last two days have been quiet, except for a clash with an armoured vehicle yesterday, in which 13 demonstrators were killed and 27 wounded. The tram lines are about to start functioning again. […] In the provinces some demonstrations have taken place, out of which some were peaceful, while others made military

interference necessary." (Tidens Tegn 23.02.1919)

"A Norwegian F-16 late Monday afternoon delivered two laser operated bombs against a bunker in the South-East of Afghanistan, inform Defence Authorities in a press release." (Aftenposten, internet version 28.01.2003)

How to read these texts from a 'subaltern' point of view? First, it is possible to see them as marked by a phenomenon in which the perpetrators are grammatically absent. In the first case, there is an armoured vehicle "causing" the clash and the casualties, in the second case an airplane is "delivering" two bombs operated by laser – by no one else?
Confronted with texts like these, we really need to study word by word. For example we discover how a euphemism of sorts is created by the lack of an acting subject in the first text, and by the focus on the tram lines after mentioning a tragedy. The passage also contains a "blaming the victim"-sentence by stating that some "others" among the demonstrators made "military interference necessary". In the second the euphemism rests on the verbal 'delivered', as if planes with deadly cargo could be likened to an average mailman.

War is for real, language stimulates images of war. In the ongoing wars in the Middle East and further East, we register how new concepts to a certain degree pass on from the militaries to the media. Often, the language is dehumanizing, as when derogatory military terminology is applied, and sometimes also used by the press; for example concepts like "cleaning up", "mopping up", "flushing out". These short expressions create a dividing line between the human and the sub-human (clean or mop, flush out) which demonstrates a deep disregard and distance from the Other. This may be necessary to make people march off to war, but it also has an impact on how war is waged ("we don't do body counts"), on whose lives are considered valuable and whose lives are expendable.

On the other hand, as Carol Cohn has showed when it comes to the war industry (after doing field work there), weapons may be humanized: To pet the pet, or sexualized: More bang for the buck, deep penetration. Or they may, as we have surely one time or the other observed, be given names before they are fired off in more or less accurate directions.

5. Being seen – and knowing it:

Part of living in a globalized world is the experience in which the subaltern may witness how they are being portrayed by the powerful media of the West, and the challenge posed by this experience. Earlier, the hidden double standards of colonialism were concealed from most people, except for a small elite – like Toer's Minke – who was allowed an education in the ideals of modernity. Sometimes it is useful to turn the world a bit upside down. Fiction writer Gerd Brantenberg did that once, when she wrote the book called "The daughters of Egalia". In this book the masculinized language is feminized, and the roles are turned around. Many – both men and women – had an eye opener.

The murder of Theo van Gogh has sent shock waves across parts of Europe. Muslims in different countries are called by the media to denounce the killing – sometimes in a kind of atmosphere as if they were all collectively responsible for this tragic and brutal event. Can we imagine the media turning their microphones towards the leading politicians of our country with the same eagerness in response to killings after torture in Iraqi or Afghan prisons?

Some leading Muslim personalities have responded to this call in a way which has not satisfied the media or their majority audiences. An example is Zahed Mokhtar in Oslo, leader-elect of Islamic council, who expressed that he could understand the feelings leading to the killing, while he simultaneously said that Islam did not permit this kind of killing. The media reactions were easy to foresee. He was brought to task by the major media of Norway for his being vague and unclear. It is being said that this man, a medical doctor, and far from being a potential terrorist, was the only man who accepted the position in the mentioned council, since they all know that this is a very vulnerable and tiring position – not the least considering the present media situation. I wonder what would have happened if the reporters had let him speak more at length, instead of constantly hammering at his vagueness and trying to shove the right words – according to the majority view – down his throat.

I did not like the way he responded. But I could observe a tiredness in his voice, a tiredness from not being understood and respected. And it was demonstrated very clearly in a TV-program last Tuesday, where he was met with a rather aggressive attitude, while a Norwegian-Norwegian big time conman, who has robbed naïve Norwegian for millions of kroner, was allowed to speak at length, without being subjected to the same kind of interrogation. Such examples of unequal treatment are observed and analyzed in minority communities and may make

more people feel tired and pessimistic about the future.

I do not know this man. I have met and interviewed his wife, also a medical doctor, a couple of years ago. They seemed to me a classic example of well-integrated Muslims in Norway, working hard, and simultaneously respecting some of the codes of Islam which make them different: She observes hijab, and is accepted at the work place.

I think the greatest challenge of today is: How to see through difference and discover what we all share, how to make space for universality while accepting that even if we realize how the politics of difference may polarize society, there is a need for acceptance of difference at a certain level, and for acceptance among the majority population of this: In a multicultural society integration is not something 'they' do, we should all risk being changed, and maybe appreciate it, as long as change does not mean more oppression or discrimination.

Since this is a Nordic conference, let me illustrate how the world has changed, by showing who were the significant foreigners 85 years ago.

Foreign invasion in Aker

In February 249 foreigners are registered as moved into Aker police district; of them 146 are Swedes, 59 Danes, 20 Germans, 3 Englishmen, 5 Russians and Finns and 16 of other foreign nationality

(Aftenposten 07.03.1919)

Today we may laugh at it, but maybe a closer investigation of how history treated these people, would stop us. I know research has been done in Sweden on how Finns have been othered in negative, stereotypical ways by the media. Baltics also?

To honor the late Edward Said, who sadly died last year, I will end by making his words mine:

"Perhaps the most important task of all would be to undertake studies in contemporary alternatives to Orientalism, to ask how one can study other cultures and peoples from a libertarian, or a nonrepressive and nonmanipulative, perspective. But one would have to rethink the whole complex problem of knowledge and power. (Orientalism: 1995:24)"

Huang Hai-feng, Chen Chao,Yao Wang, Beth. Meade

The Significance of Cross-cultural Management among Chinese Enterprises in International Business

Abstract

Today the importance of cross-cultural management competence is well recognized in China. China's entry into the WTO has produced the effect of attracting more global companies to operate in China and has influenced Chinese companies to set up operations outside their home country[1]. These two situations have put cross-cultural issues at the forefront in China today. Challenges relating to different cultural backgrounds, belief systems, and management styles are now realized as important to navigate successfully in China. Base on the Cultural Orientations Model theory of cross-cultural management, two case studies have been carried out in China by China's Research Center for Economic Transition (CRCET) at Beijing University of Technology. One is about the shifting of cultural behaviors in the young professional population of China; the other is in three areas of cross-cultural issues, relating these issues to the current cross-cultural environment. Many people are experiencing culture shock as they are exposed to different cultural attributes. After describing the current observation of cross-cultural competence in China, we will propose some suggestions for its future development. They include suggestions for successful navigation of cross-cultural challenges and successful navigation across the cultures of global companies operating in China.

Keywords: Cross-cultural management, International cooperation, International business, Management

1 Present situation

In this presentation we will make a brief introduction of the current cross-cultural environment in China. There are a number of public institutions addressing cross-cultural issues and training in several subject areas. These include the State Cultural Ventures, Development Research Foundation; the Culture Industry Research Institute

at Peking University; and the Cultural Research Center of the Chinese Academy of Social Science in Beijing. Several international forums have been held in China in recent years to encourage and facilitate dialogues among international experts in the area of cross-cultural studies and education. We will also provide an introductory selection of both Chinese and foreign private companies currently offering cross-cultural programs in China.

Cross-cultural training content focus includes: (1) Global business environment; (2) Communication skills and competence; (3) Behavioral impact of cross-cultural issues; (4) Cross-cultural sensitivity; (5) Basic skills of cross-cultural communication; (6) How to avoid misunderstandings in cross-cultural contexts; (7) Improve international exchanges.

We will examine the cross-cultural environment in China utilizing internationally recognized theoretical models. Additionally, we propose to suggest how the cross-cultural environment in China is affecting the economy of China based on its position in the global marketplace. Finally, we will make recommendations for future cross-cultural advancement in China.

2 Theory of cross-cultural management: cultural orientation model

Here we will introduce the Cultural Orientation Model[2]. This model includes ten cultural dimensions and applies the following three criteria: (1) Each dimension needs to recognize an important aspect of social life; (2) Each dimension needs to be something which any socio-cultural environment gives its members as a basic orientation for the shared rationale of behavior; (3) Each dimension has practical value to managers, leaders, and anyone else who needs to reconcile, integrate, or transcend cultural differences in order to

Tab.1 Comparative cultural orientation model[2]

obtain a desired outcome. Definitions of ten dimensions: (1) Environment: How individuals view and relate to people, objects, and issues within their sphere of influence; (2) Time: How individuals perceive the nature of time and its use; (3) Action: How individuals view actions and interactions; (4) Communication: How individuals express themselves; (5) Space: How individuals demarcate their physical and psychological space; (6) Power: How individuals view differential power relationships; (7) Individualism: How individuals define their identity; (8) Competitiveness: How individuals are motivated; (9) Structure: How individuals approach change, risk, ambiguity, and uncertainty; (10) Thinking: How individuals conceptualize.

	China	Germany	Japan	USA
Environment	Harmony	Control	Harmony	Control
Time	Past	Future	Future	Present
Action	Being	Doing	Being	Doing
Communication	High context	Low context	High context	Low context
Space	Public	Private	Public	Private
Power	Hierarchy	Hierarchy	Hierarchy	Equality
Individualism	Collectivist	Individualistic	Collectivist	Individualistic
Competitiveness	Cooperative	Competitive	Cooperative	Competitive
Structure	Order	Order	Order	Flexibility
Thinking	Systemic	Linear	Systemic	Linear

In order to provide further explanation and examples to make the Cultural Orientations Model more “real life”, we will use data gathered in a previous research project conducted by CRCET. We will begin with Environment. There are cooperative ways, for example, harmony and mutual control, in working conditions. Communication is the most important in Japan and China, through informal ways. In contrast, institutions and laws are emphasized in Germany and the USA.

Next, each culture has its own unique relationship to the concept of time. In Asian cultures there is more of an emphasis on the past and applying meaning of past events and results to current situations. As well Asian cultures tend to operate in a fluid time culture i.e., it is more important to build relationships and holistic approaches rather than to concentrate on completing a specific task on a specific schedule. This also contributes to more of a long-term view of business transactions and relationships. In contrast, the Euro-American cultures are very much grounded in the present and more “instant gratification” is expected. These cultures operate on a much more fixed-time

orientation, feeling most comfortable when operating on a precise time schedule to complete specific tasks.

Relating the orientation of how cultures approach action we can see that the Asian cultures following the theme of harmony in their environment operate in a context of "being" as opposed to "doing". In this way they see themselves as part of the environment and are influenced by the situational environment rather than as being in control of the environment. In opposition to this we see the Euro-Americans in more of a "doing" orientation attempting to take control of their environment and influence outcomes more directly. Sometimes, in a business environment this can be interpreted as a lack of urgency on the part of the Asian individual versus a high sense of urgency and the "time is money" attitude exhibited by Euro-Americans.

Communication styles differ among cultures also. In the Asian cultures we see more indirect or high context communications. Many words are used to develop a highly contextual/situational message with the meaning sometimes very ambiguously presented. In contrast the Euro-American cultures tend to be direct/low context communicators. Few words more directly communicated to get their idea across to a listener are a common attribute.

Space orientation differs in Asian cultures depending on the situational context. In a business negotiation or meeting setting space orientation will be private i.e., greater physical distance between individual participants and no physical contact; yet in an actual office situation space is more public in orientation. By this we mean that often in Asian offices large open spaces are filled with many desks as opposed to the Euro-American style of cubicles or actual closed wall offices. Another more general viewpoint is related to population density and demographics. In China and Japan the population density is such that space is at a premium resulting in little privacy as opposed to the larger living space orientations in less populated Germany and U.S.

Power orientation or how people recognize authority and status is our next examination point. In China today, status is determined based primarily occupation and secondarily based on family within the community. With increased movement of the population from rural areas to cities the occupational position frame of reference is now more commonly used to assign status to an individual. Within organizations in China and Japan structure is still hierarchical. This means that there is a large power discrepancy between leaders at the top and employees on down the organization. Interestingly although in Germany individuals at all levels of business organizations respect each other as individuals and in many ways as equals, there is still a strong hierarchy within organizational structures with a lot of top down decision making.

Within Asian cultures there is a lot more emphasis placed on a group or collectivist orientation. Teamwork and consensual decision-making in the work group are attributes of this orientation within Asia. The unity of the group is held in high esteem. Particularly in Japanese culture the extended family group is very highly honored. Teamwork and understanding one's role within the team also exemplifies this collectivist attribute within Asian cultures. In most Euro-American populations there is much more emphasis on the individual and on performing independently in one's own self interest. The individual's ability and contribution to achieving business results are recognized by authority figures in Euro-American cultural contexts. Particular to American culture being a "hero" above all others involved is highly prized.

As may be expected within the context of Asian cultural norms the orientation of competitiveness versus cooperativeness resulting in a predominantly cooperative atmosphere coincides with the collectivist attribute of Asian culture. The teamwork and group unity lend itself to naturally cooperative orientation. In the Euro-American individualist society, competition is more likely to occur. One individual rising above all others in a group to be designated "winner" or "hero" is not an unusual result in organizations.

In relation to an order orientation, Asian cultures tend to exhibit a high desire for order. They prefer a clear sense of structure resulting in tightly controlled activities that are clearly assigned. In this way each person's role is defined and all parties are clear on expectations with no possibility of disappointing or offending any one person within an organization or group. In a slightly different aspect the German culture also highly regards order within an organization. In the German culture it is believed an order structure will increase control and contribute more methodically and logically to achievement of long-term results in a measurable progression. In opposition to both the Asian and German cultural orientations toward order, the American culture strongly believes that flexibility is preferred. Flexibility allowing for quick movement of organizations to take advantage of changing environmental conditions is emphasized. Ability as an individual to successfully navigate changing expectations and roles is an attribute many American organizations are looking for in employees or group members.

The systemic orientation of Asian thinking patterns requires participants to concentrate on information received versus information anticipated. The systemic thinking pattern integrates the holistic approach resulting from the collectivist/cooperative orientations in the Asian cultures. In direct opposition to this approach we find the Germans and Americans. These Euro-American cultures tend to think in a linear fashion. In this

linear process the Euro-American will break down a project or situation into discreet pieces and address each issue or task in turn before moving on. As can be supposed, these two different approaches can create a lot of friction in a cross-cultural negotiation between Asians and Euro-Americans.

3 China research

3.1 Case study one[3]

A survey conducted in 2003-2004 by CRCET produced results exemplifying the shifting of cultural behaviors in the young professional population of China.

Tab. 2 China's Culture Characteristic Change

Cultural Characteristic	Meaning	Present Situation
Han Xu	Indirect	Direct
Qian Xu	Modest	Pride
Ting Hua	Listening	Interactive
	Passive	
Ke Qi	Politeness	Politeness
	Unconditional	Conditional
Guan Xi	Nepotism	Qualifications
	Cannot terminate	Can terminate

Five characteristics of Chinese communications were queried in this survey. The first characteristic was Han Xu meaning implicit communication. Han Xu may define both verbal and nonverbal communications. In the past, the accepted social norm was to communicate indirectly creating lots of relational context during each interaction. Today, young professionals find that they have evolved their behavior to more direct communications in order to achieve their goals in the international business environment.

The second characteristic surveyed was Qian Xu, meaning modest. In the past it was expected that individuals, especially young people entering the workforce, would be very humble about their qualifications, experience and capability. Young Chinese professionals today are finding that in order to compete for positions within multi-national companies operating in China they must show pride in their accomplishments. Currently, young Chinese professionals must directly and confidently state their

positive attributes to potential employers. Competition for employment is making it necessary for young Chinese professionals to develop these skills or else risk unemployment.

The third characteristic, Ting Hua, means listening-centeredness. Previously, this was characterized by a Chinese employee listening passively to his/her supervisor and following orders precisely. This at times has produced unintended results due to possible situational changes, etc. of which the supervisor may have been unaware at the time of the instruction to the subordinate. It used to be unacceptable for an employee to express any active opinion either positive or negative when being spoken to by a supervisor. Chinese management today realizes that it is helpful and sometimes more effective and efficient to encourage employees to communicate their ideas and opinions on the job.

The fourth characteristic, Ke Qi, means politeness. This characteristic can cover both communications and actions. Thoughtful, mannerly communications seeking harmony with others resulting in peaceful relations has been the primary goal in relation to this characteristic. Sometimes this has come at a price to the originator of a communication resulting in over-simplification of an achievement or possibly gravely inconveniencing the originator from another matter or task. Young professionals today are still polite and pleasant but are more likely to express directly if a particular request may not be convenient for them to fulfill[4][5].

The fifth characteristic, Guan Xi, means relationship, personal connection. Guan Xi used to be most recognized in the practice of employment of relatives, nepotism, in business enterprises, or even as entry to educational institutions. This created a heavy burden in some cases due to relatives not being qualified for positions whereby the business then possibly became unsuccessful. It also created a strained relationship with management being unable to terminate particular employees regardless of their lack of contribution to an enterprise. Although Guan Xi is still an important characteristic of today's China business environment it has evolved beyond relatives to include classmates, work colleagues, and other close relationships. Although Chinese management initially may be easier to reach using Guan Xi, in the end it will review a potential employee candidate based on a combination of the candidate's qualifications and skills with the Guan Xi connection becoming secondary. This also gives the management team the freedom in the future to terminate employees based on non-performance of goals regardless of initial Guan Xi introduction.

3.2 Case study two

A research project conducted in 2003-2004 by CRCET examined three areas of cross-cultural issues relating these issues to the current cross-cultural environment in China followed by recommendations for future solutions and training methods.

The three areas defined in this study included cross-cultural management, cultural competence, and culture shock. Cross-cultural management was defined as managing cultural diversity within the business environment. Within China, this may include national diversity due to China having 56 distinct ethnic groups, demographic workforce movements across China, as well as increasing involvement of females in the workforce. Also today we must add to this a large influx of foreigners who are serving both in management and employee roles in the Chinese workplace.

Next, a definition for cross-cultural competence was developed. This emphasized the importance of the "how" of communicating in a cross-cultural environment. There are several attributes that may contribute to successful cross-cultural communication skills. Listening skills should be developed which accommodate adaptation and acceptance of other cultural viewpoints. Assertiveness and observation leading to careful situational analysis resulting in cultural sensitivity can also contribute to the success of cross-cultural interactions.

Finally, an explanation of the phenomenon of culture shock was proposed. The viewpoint expressed in this research study is the psychological conflict within individuals that is experienced outside their own home cultural environment. This is a stage of cross-cultural development that individuals must process and work through in order to achieve a competent level of functioning in a culture other than their own.

4 Suggestions for successful navigation of cross-cultural challenges

4.1 Adaptation of international business orientation

Today there is more awareness in China of cross-cultural issues and their affect on the economic development and success of Chinese enterprises. The Chinese population is observing the cultural similarities and differences among their indigenous ethnic groups and those of the large number of foreigners coming into the country largely for commercial purposes.

One strong viewpoint of the local Chinese population is that it is the foreigner and not the Chinese individual or organization that needs to be more culturally aware. Most times, it is a foreigner coming into a commercial enterprise in a management position

over Chinese employees. This is a short-sighted approach that today, through increased education and awareness, is changing. There is a realization that cultural awareness is a two-way communication and relationship issue.

4.2 Building communication and management systems with cross-cultural attributes

Today, China is an open economic development zone which has become intertwined with global business development. Informed Chinese will tend to copy what they view as "successful" business practices regardless of cultural orientation. There is a realization that Chinese enterprises cannot compete based solely on the attribute of the "lowest cost" product/service alternative. Today's global customers consider many attributes other than cost when making purchasing decisions. This has required Chinese enterprises to spend more time observing and understanding their business partners and customers i.e., culture.

The need to adopt international business practices in order to compete with other countries that are members of WTO, to build a better image for products and services in order to enter the global marketplace, as well as free trade of products and services based on competitive advantages has motivated Chinese enterprises to become more culturally aware.

Today, due to consideration of self (Chinese) as an international citizen, consumer cultures are different resulting in more "open" minds. The competitive atmosphere in business rather than the cooperative international business environment is profit oriented, not planned, forcing Chinese enterprises to change their previous business models.

Chinese business organizations are now not so dependent on top-down instructions from a central governmental agency. Organizations are becoming more democratic in decision-making styles resulting in increased accountability. The continued positive attributes of Chinese enterprise operations continue to be a willingness of employees to help each other and a leader's continued feeling of paternal responsibility for his employees.

4.3 Accepting cross cultural challenges

In this section, we will propose some suggestions for increasing cross-cultural competence regardless of current cultural orientation. These will be focused on personal attributes that may assist individuals to better navigate cross-cultural situations.

To begin, a tolerance for ambiguity (i.e., the unclear or the unknown) is a helpful attribute when faced with a new cross-cultural situation. Individuals are advised to develop confidence in the face of new situations that are outside their home country experiences. Next, openness both of behavior and cognitive functioning will greatly assist an individual in reaching a comfort zone within a foreign culture. A willingness to be flexible in one's own behavior and thinking will lead to more productive cross-cultural experiences.

Individuals with a strong sense of self-awareness and personal identity will do well in cross- cultural situations. They will be able to maintain their identity with little confusion when faced with new cultural customs. In conjunction with this, a core of cultural self-awareness and recognition of how one's own culture has influenced value systems, behavior, and problem solving abilities will contribute to success in a foreign culture.

Patience with oneself in new situations that may be uncomfortable is a valuable attribute for people exposed to cross-cultural situations. Interpersonal sensitivity to others will also smooth communications and interactions among people of different cultures.

Being open to new experiences and appreciating differences will lead to more comfortable integration between two or more cultures. A sense of empathy in understanding other cultures will also be helpful. Finally, a substantial dose of humility will serve anyone in a cross-cultural interaction well. The ability to be modest and have an honest respect for cultures other than one's own will lead to more satisfying cross-cultural relationships.

4.4 Successful navigation across cultures in global companies operating in china

In this final section we will make some general suggestions on considerations related to cross-cultural issues when attempting to do business in a Chinese environment. (1) Hire people that have interest in China and Chinese culture or hire industry experts; (2) Hire mirror leaders: one international leader/one local Chinese leader; (3) Understand and be educated about target country culture; (4) Appropriate preparation and training of both expatriate and local employees; (5) Determine the best method of merging cultural attributes of the people and organizations. Internal company training to communicate the big picture for each employee in the company is the first step. Utilize experts for cross-cultural training.

As to hiring people that have interest in China and Chinese culture, there are three ways to hire people: (a) Using only headquarters people who familiar with national

policy and power structures; (b) Using local people or overseas Chinese; (c) Using global employees.

It is appropriate to establish "going out" talented personnel bank to bring up talented personnel in a planned way and expand personnel for management and administration. It is suggested that the departments concerned implement a project for personnel training, selecting throughout the country a batch or even several batches of entrepreneurs with basic qualified conditions for concentration training, including overseas training for a certain period of time. Meanwhile, we should broaden our version to discover and recruit, throughout the country and even the world, the managing personnel with lofty ideals, who are willing to work with the overseas Chinese capital enterprises, enlarge the sources of personnel so as to ensure a solid reserve of administrative and managing personnel for "going out" [6].

Conclusions

Cross-cultural management and culture training are increasingly becoming key issues in international economies, not only as a result of globalization, but also of internationalization. More and more institutions look for advice on how to cope with cultural differences. We should think much of the significance of cross-cultural management among Chinese enterprises in international business.

References

[1] Panitchpakdi, Supachai. Clifford, Mark L□China and the WTO. Singapore, John Wiley & Sons (Asia) Pte Ltd. ,2002.

[2] Walker, Danielle, Thomas Walker and Joerg Schmitz, Doing business internationally: The guide to cross-Cultural success, McGraw-Hill, New York, pp. 56-57, 2003.

[3] De Mente, Boye Lafayette, Chinese Etiquette & Ethics in Business. Chicago Illinois, NTC Publishing Group, 1996.

[4] Beamer, Linda. Varner, IrisIntercultural Communication in the Global Workplace. 2nd Edition, New York, McGraw-Hill/Irwin , 2001.

[5] Davis, Linell, Doing Culture–Cross-cultural Communication in Action. China: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, 1999.

[6] ZHANG Yong-xing, Successful experience in “going out” by Chinese capital enterprises in Singapore and suggestions, Multinational corporations, no. 3, February, p. 37.

Acknowledgements

The authors are most grateful to Peter King and Ma Hongyi who have generously given much of their time and expertise to help the completion of this research.

Elsa Helén Helleland and Ingrid Hanssen

Minority language students in Norwegian nursing colleges – problems and challenges

About 1/3 of our minority language students take leave of absence after their first year of basic nurses' training at our college. Many more quit school all together during their second and third year. Findings from Norway's largest college, Oslo University College (1), indicate that the problem is equally great other places.

Why is it so hard for many minority language students to succeed in Norwegian nursing colleges? What can be done to make their academic life easier? In this paper we wish to share some thoughts and experiences that may help answer these quiestions.

Cultural background

Minority language students constitute no homogenous group. Some of them came to Norway as children, while others are born in Norway of foreign parents. Others again come to Norway to receive their nurse's training. Their backgrounds vary geographically, culturally, and religiously, and they carry with them their personal experiences and individual psychological characteristics. There may furthermore be great differences between members of any particular ethnic group when it comes to class, world views, political philosophies, academic aspirations, and so on.

Both linguistic, cultural, and psychosocial factors play an important role in minority language nursing students' academic achievements: how they have learned to learn, whether they feel lonely and homesick and/or if they feel alien in relation to the expectations of the Norwegian society. Learning takes place in the majority culture's colleges on the majority culture's terms. Quite often one finds that students who are used to receive top grates in their native country suddenly have problems following the expected learning curve and pass exams.

In addition to the above situation, immigration is a process that in itself causes a lot of social, cultural, and psychological losses that can lead to profound grief reactions. The immigration process therefore may be seen as a crisis reaction. In this situation social support and an adequate social network are important 'buffers' between the student and the requirements and expectations of the society in general and the nursing college in particular. Many of the immigrant students lack such 'buffers' (2). Additionally stressors like differences in attitudes and value systems, changes in the communicative system, and expected and ingrained roles
make immigration a stressful experience. These stressors constitute the main themes of this paper.

Attitudes and value systems

We are products of a Western society with considerable individualistic traits. Hofstede (3) defines 'individualism' as pertaining to societies "in which the ties between individuals are loose: everyone is expected to look after himself or herself and his or her immediate family" (p. 51). Individualistic societies focus among other things on autonomy, independence, and individual initiative.

Independence and autonomy are values that give Western people a tendency to express feelings and needs and see self-actualisation as important. These values may create very different students to work with than students socialised to a modus operandi characterised by interdependence and obedience.

Studies show that Asian female students in American higher education rarely voice their opinions because they do not want to disturb the class or ask questions that may be perceived as criticism (4). This hesitancy stems from an upbringing focusing on the duty and obedience that in many Asian societies is a heritage of the great philosopher Confucius, who saw inter-relational status as a determinator for correct social conduct. Even if Asian societies have gone through radical changes in modern times, the notions of obedience to authority have survived. One may find similar authoritarian characteristics in societies not based on Confucian philosophy, as well. Some of our students may feel themselves squeezed between the traditional requirements to respect

authorities and the individualism and outspokenness they are expected to demonstrate in Norwegian schools.

To be able to succeed, it is important that minority language students learn the rules of social interaction of the Norwegian society. As we see it, they should be offered classes tailored to help them understand the 'system', what it takes to be a successful student within this system, for instance that they are expected to be investigative and actively participating both during lectures and in lab activities, tutorials, student groups, hospital practice etc. Experience has taught us that these expectations can be rather overwhelming to students used to an authoritarian educational system and a correspondingly passive student role.

It is also important to learn about the students' expectations, personal histories, and linguistic backgrounds and skills. One also needs to discuss the reciprocal roles of teachers and students, and who to contact when they have questions or need someone to talk to. Studies show that minority students wish that their teachers more actively help them to participate in class activities and to voice their opinions, for instance by being asked about their knowledge and experiences in relation to subjects like social sciences and intercultural nursing (5).

Changes in the communicative system

To acquire linguistic and communicative competency is particularly difficult to many minority language students (6). *Linguistic competency* is here defined as the ability to shape grammatically 'correct' sentences, *communicative competency* the ability to receive, digest, and communicate information accurately and clearly. It takes time to gain linguistic and communicative competency; it may take four to eight years to reach an adequate linguistic level to be a successful student.

The term 'linguistic ego' is used to describe the fundamental processes involved in learning a new language (7). Our mother tongue is inextricably tied in with our understanding of the world surrounding us and is an integrated part of our social learning. To learn a new language entails learning how other people understand their world and what codes govern their interaction, that is, how the language is utilised in a

cultural context. It takes time to learn to master the synonyms, nuances, values, and symbols of a new language. Quite a few people never reach true mastery. Professional terminology, with its highly developed jargon through which the members of that profession describe, understand, and utilise knowledge, constitutes an additional level of learning and context (6, 9).

Communication problems limit both the students' ability to express their thoughts and feelings to co-students and teachers and their taking in information about how the 'system' works. It furthermore makes it much more difficult for them to communicate needs, thoughts, and wishes, and it may cause their need for tutoring and supervision to be misunderstood or ignored (4). All this may threaten their self image.

When someone is taught Norwegian, the focus is on everyday, mundane vocabulary. It takes more time to learn abstract terminology, and many people who handle the everyday language quite well, may have a very limited abstract vocabulary. This also goes for people who have grown up in Norway, but who mainly communicates in their parents' language in their daily lives. In their academic work, nursing's particular brand of abstract language is something students are required to learn and master. For many this does not only mean that they have to acquire a new vocabulary, but also a new way of thinking to be able to understand the philosophy behind the words. If both the philosophy and the vocabulary are unfamiliar, the requirements facing the students may seem overwhelming.

Listening, talking, reading, and writing

Nursing students are expected to read and digest texts quickly, express themselves clearly, write persuasive expositions, take useful lecture notes, and to be active and inquisitive students. One of the main differences between how native Norwegian speakers and minority language students learn, is related to the linguistic skills of listening, talking, and writing. It is therefore important to identify what skill or skills are the most central in different academic contexts. This matrix (8) is meant to depict academic contexts that nursing students – and other students as well, we would think – are involved in on a regular basis.

	Listening	Talking	Reading	Writing
Independent studies			Reading	Writing

Homework and written exams			Reading	Writing
Oral exams	Listening	Talking		
Discussion groups; group activities; role playing	Listening	Talking		
Tutorials; in groups and individually	Listening	Talking		Writing
Supervision related to nursing practice; in groups and individually	Listening	Talking		
Lectures	Listening	Talking	Reading	Writing

This matrix is developed to help identify contexts that may be particularly demanding on minority language students.

Listening: Correct and clear pronunciation is essential to understanding. Besides being divided into two official languages, Norwegian is divided into numerous dialects. Some of these dialects make understanding difficult, as their vocal sounds, words, and intonation may be very different from the straight 'bokmål', or major Norwegian language, most minority language students have learned. Furthermore, we find that many native speakers 'package' their message in a multitude of little words; synonyms and expressions that are more confusing than clarifying to someone with a limited vocabulary. Linguistic usage meant to clarifying may instead make the message more diffuse and hard to understand.

Talking: It may be difficult to pronounce unfamiliar sounds. Furthermore, there is a difference between everyday language and academic and professional nursing linguistic usage.

During group discussions the talk often shifts directions and develops in bounds. The participants may speak quickly, in unfinished sentences, and all at once. All this makes it difficult for minority language students to follow the discussion and understand what is going on. A Chinese former student tells us that she always had a bad conscience during group discussions because she felt she was an impediment to the group since she always needed more time to understand what was being said. This is a feeling

many minority language students experience, a feeling that may make them non-participating and silent. Many of them even experience to be turned away by Norwegian students when they try to participate in discussion groups (1). When minority language speaking students for one reason or other do not take part in group activities together with native Norwegian speakers, this reduces their opportunity to develop the linguistic skills needed to be an active and successful student.

Reading: Reading a foreign language takes time. Lack of vocabulary may furthermore frustrate understanding and cause loss of nuances. Academic texts are characterised by information density, viewing the discussed topics from various angles, and by complex sentences. Ready answers and simple explanations are rarities. Studies show that minority language students often do not take notice of words that function as keys to the text (1), and this reduces their understanding considerably.

Writing: It is more difficult to learn written than oral language. One has to know the rules of grammar, how to construct sentences, orthography, and writing styles. Furthermore, within nursing there are rather strict norms regarding how to write academic texts. Only rarely are minority language students able to produce texts that are balanced and deliberative. Instead they tend to be unqualified and categorical (1). Besides the fact that argumentation and the expression of qualified thought demand a high level of linguistic competency, many of these students have learned to understand theoretical knowledge merely in the light of natural laws that are to be learned by heart (9). They are used to be presented with *The Truth* by their teachers, who clearly delineates between correct and erroneous knowledge, and to learn by cramming, not by thinking critically.

Minority language students should be given the opportunity to participate in specially tailored group tutorials where important words and expressions are explained and where they are free to ask questions. Students who find it difficult to take adequate lecture notes should be offered a written outline of the content of the lectures by their teachers and given extra time after lectures to copy transparencies etc. Some may find it useful to tape record lectures. Native Norwegian speaking students may help out with lecture notes. As a bonus, this kind of assistance may encourage social contact between the different student groups and promote solidarity.

Written assignments: When students have difficulty writing in Norwegian, this should be taken into consideration regarding written assignments. Most of these students need more tutoring than native speakers do. Quite a few find it helpful to write parts of the text in their own language and translate it into Norwegian afterwards. To do this, they need more time than other students.

Exams: Since a lot of students find Norwegian difficult, they should be allowed to use a dictionary during exams. The terminology of the exam questions should correspond with the terminology used in lectures and curricular texts. Unfamiliar terminology and culturally saturated clichés must be avoided. Students who want or need to use computers, should be allowed to do so.

Expected and ingrained roles

Norwegian teachers generally wish to convey an accommodating attitude. Minority language students may on their part be used to more authoritarian teachers. As already mentioned, many of these students behave in a more passive manner than do Norwegians, and in student groups they tend to be seen as 'freeloaders', while they in tutorials and in nursing practice contexts tend to be seen as 'un-enterprising' (1). One does not have to look further than to former Yugoslavia to find a, to Norwegian teachers, foreign kind of respect for the authority of the teacher and a less inquisitive attitude to learning. Our college runs a nursing college in Igalo in Montenegro in cooperation with the University of Podgorica and Institute Igalo, and we find that our students there have to go through an adaptation process to get used to our demands concerning critical and problem oriented thought and to participate in discussions with teachers and co-students. To students used to standing at a deferential distance from their teachers during conversations, our informal behaviour and our demands for active participation in tutorials, take time to get used to.

To discuss a written product in progress is another totally foreign aspect to our Montenegrin students. They are used to be told what is right and wrong in the finished product, not to be given feedback regarding a work-in-progress. To reflect together with the tutor instead of being told what to do, is difficult for them to handle. Also

Asian and African students tend to find it strange to discuss and reflect together with their tutors.

Conclusion

One may be so concerned with the other person's differentness that one becomes over-careful towards minority language students (10). If one is worried that one may say or do something that might make the minority language student seem different, one may ignore their basic human need to be 'seen' and their unique needs related to their cultural backgrounds and minority language situation. Furthermore, sometimes one sees a tendency that if a Norwegian student for instance expresses disagreement or uncertainty, this is given a psychological explanation, while identical behaviour in a minority language student is given a cultural explanation.

If one is more focused on the student's culture than the student as a person, this may affect the teacher-student relationship, since the teacher may be so concerned with seeming respecting and accepting that he or she is not able to act according to his or her professional judgement.
Imagination, critical thought, and curiosity are necessary to combat mono-cultural and stereotype attitudes in our colleges.

Referanses

Greek, M.; Halvorsen, E.B. (2000): *Norsk fagspråk 1996-99.* Oslo: HiO-notat No. 4

Stamnes, J.H. (2000): Social support, social network and health. *Vård i Norden,* (20) 4, pp. 23-27

Hofstede, G. (1991): *Culture and Organizations: Software of the Mind.* London: McGraw-Hill

Hune, S. (2003): *Asian Pacific American Women in Higher Education: Claiming Visibility & Voice*. Association of American Colleges and Universities Program on the Status of Education of Women

Otterstad, A.M.; Becher, A.A. (2000): "Snakk med oss! – om etniske minoriteter og multikulturalisme i høgre utdanning". *Norsk Pedagogisk Tidsskrift*, 6, pp. 425-435

Phillips, S.; Hartley, J.T. (1990): Teaching students for whom English is a second language. *Nurse Educator*, (15) 5, pp. 29 – 32
Brown, D. (1986): *Learning a second culture.* London: Cambridge Language Teaching Library
Helleland, E.H. (1998): *Aktuelle tiltak i forhold til fremmedspråklige studenters studiesituasjon*. Utredning, Avdeling for helse- og sosialfag, Høgskolen i Sør-Trøndelag
Moravcsik, M.J. (1985): Teaching Third World Students. *Journal of College Science Teaching*, 15, pp. 86 – 91
(10) Hanssen, I. (2992): *Facing Differentness. An empirical inquiry into ethical challenges in*
intercultural nursing. Doctoral dissertation. Oslo: The Institute of Nursing Science, The
University of Oslo

Øystein Lund Johannessen

Some critical reflections on the concept of "cultural encounter" (kulturmøte) and its use within the Norwegian discourse of multicultural education

Introduction

In my work as a coordinator for further education courses for teachers and social workers specializing in Multicultural Awareness, I have noticed that a new concept, namely "kulturmøte" in Norwegian or *cultural encounter* as it might be translated into English, has become more and more popular in textbooks and articles. Gradually it has entered first the scientific, later also the professional discourses within multicultural awareness. Although I have not yet seen the concept in use in the general public discourse on internationalisation, immigration and integration as it unfolds in newspapers and other medias, I think it is just a matter of time before so happens. It is this concept and the way it is being used - and I would also say misused - which is the main theme of this paper.

One could ask why I choose to discuss a concept so much rooted in a Nordic intercultural and multicultural discourse and in the Scandinavian languages, and which is so little known in the International literature on Intercultural Communication. One reason for this choice is that I think my critique of the way the concept is being used, points to some important problems within the greater discourses of multiculturalism and Intercultural Communication of which it is a part. Secondly, and this is my main reason, the way I suggest to define the concept, it points to a type of situations that is well known to most of us and which I think represents a major professional challenge both within the education sector and other public sectors.

The main points I want to make in this paper were originally presented in an article with the name "Hjemkomst fra utenlandsopphold - Kulturmøte eller kulturkonflikt? ("Reentry – cultural encounter or cultural conflict?", published under the Program for Cultural Studies of the Norwegian Research Council in 2003 - Haus, Skeie,

Johannessen 2003).There my empirical focus was on the encounter between returnees from international assignments and their workplace and former colleagues before they went abroad. In that project it is concluded that to frame professional experiences achieved during international assignments as "culturally distinct experiences" or "intercultural experiences", seldom helps when trying to make such professional experience relevant after having returned home. It seemed like the reference to cultural differences had a negative impact on the possibility of bringing across important experiences, knowledge and information from abroad to leaders or colleagues in the home organization.

In the present paper my aim is to relate this same theoretical discussion to the professional discourse on multiculturalism and especially to look for its possible relevance for the teaching profession and the education sector. How is cultural difference being judged in the late-modern society where cultural difference is such a major characteristic? One could think that for instance the rising popularity of the term *cultural encounter* – apparently at the expense of other concepts like *cultural conflict* and *cultural clash* – has to do with a change in the public opinion in favour of a more plural society. I am not so sure, however, that this is the case. To some extent it seems like the introduction of a new term is ideologically motivated, expressing "wishful thinking" about a more tolerant society, more positive to the global variety in cultural forms. This has made me more sceptical to the use of the term, even though I fully support the overall goal of a more tolerant society. If it is a fact that cultural difference too often leads to conflict, the way to deal with it is not to reframe the experienced kind of situation from *culture conflict* to *cultural encounter* if none of the reasons behind the conflict is being investigated, analysed and treated. The point I want to make, is not that striving to find concepts and a professional terminology which makes cultural difference sound positive is wrong in it self. The point is rather that professionals need good to-the-point concepts which are "good to think with" and which distinguish important situations and phenomenons from each other. In turn that will increase the probability that professionals will be capable of sorting out the most to-the-point interpretations of factual situations and be helpful in taking the right practical decisions.

The teaching profession and the cultural encounter

Often when the term "kulturmøte" is used to label situations, one reads between the lines that the reference is the kind of situation where cultural differences has become

an issue, *and that it has lead to problems*, mainly because the cultural differences at stake has activated a well known framework for interpretation of social situations - the perspective of "us" and "them". The suggested definition of "kulturmøte as given in this paper, is meant to disconnect the term from its implicit normative connotations and turn it into a more descriptive one. The new challenge then, for the user, especially within the public discourse on multicultural awareness, is to show

- how real cultural encounters as defined here *take place all the time* in professional practice
- that they are experienced by the participants as *positive as well as negative*, calm and stressful, normal and extraordinary etc
- that *such situations from the outset have many potentialities* in terms of being functional or "good for practice" for the participants and the tasks to be carried out,
- but that they *sometimes require professional experience and skills* in order to work that way. It is a kind of situation that sometimes need to be guided if not to take their own course regardless of the interests and intentions of the participants

For the same reason such situations should sometimes be avoided or maybe just postponed for a more suitable social arena or occasion to come up. At the same time it should be emphasized that cultural encounters can be just the right thing; to highlight cultural differences, make them explicit and discuss them openly in an atmosphere of interest, mutual understanding and openness to new solutions for coexistence (if needed). This is where the use of the concept *cultural encounter* becomes interesting for teacher training and the enhancement of multicultural awareness in the teaching profession. Now, before I move further into the concept of cultural encounter, let me give a short example to illustrate the last point.

I will tell about a primary school I know quite well and which I think in some ways is quite typical for the present situation in Norwegian primary schools, at least in the lesser urbanized areas. It is a very good school in many ways. It has a very professional administration and pedagogical personnel, and this is reflected at all levels in the daily work. The contact between teacher and parents is very good and the different groups forming the school community work well together with both physical, social and pedagogical aspects of the pupils situation. I also know that learning difficulties of different kinds among individual pupils, generally are handled very

professionally both by the teachers in the everyday situation and by the school administration.

The last two decades or so a quite big group of families and kids from a conservative Christian minority group has been member of the school community. They practice quite different norms in the nurturing of their kids. This at times influence social life in the class, for instance when it comes to the celebration of birthdays and in the planning of excursions and school trips. This situation is also handled very professionally, and the way it is handled is both by discussing practical problems openly in the parents reunions and by individual agreements between parents and teacher. It is important to mention here that these parents always are very active in the parents committees and reunions, they contribute positively in running the parents committees and they speak openly about their special needs as members of a Christian community demanding full loyalty to its upbringing principles.

Then some years ago, within a short time span, some refugee families from Somalia moved into the school community. Classes on all grades got two or three Somali kids in their midst. The way this situation was talked about, however, by school teachers in private situations outside school was to my surprise completely unprofessional, and the way this whole situation was handled by the administration at least from the start, was not of the same character as I knew from before. What is it that makes this situation so different – especially in the way it is handled – from similar situations where the group aspect of the integration process is particularly strong? Mother tong and the process of second language learning is an important aspect of this situation, of course. But there is also a strong expression of rejection of the problem and professional withdrawal which is quite different from the general picture. Let me now look into this situation step by stem from a more theoretical point of view and gradually connect this situation to the concept of cultural encounter.

Multicultural Awareness and the late modern plurality

To set the scene for our theoretical discussion, it is necessary to take a closer look at the Norwegian public, professional and academic discourses of multicultural awareness of which cultural encounter is an integral part. It is interesting that the concept *multicultural* in these discourses never really have been used or explicitly said to represent all kinds of plurality in the late modern society. First and foremost it has been associated with migration from the South and East to Northern/Western Europe

in the second part of the last century, later also with the arrival of refugees from the African and Latin American continents and Asia following the post-colonial political conflicts. Specifically when we look at concepts like *multicultural awareness* and *multicultural competence*, the implicit assumption seem to be that communication and interaction with people who have most of their life experiences from outside Northern Europe/North America, implies a qualitatively different challenge for North Europeans than to tackle any other daily communicative challenges. I will now look critically into this assumption and see if I can identify any such qualitative difference.

To clarify this point, I find it helpful to introduce the concept of *plurality* to my discussion. The idea is that this will further help us to clarify the special use of *multicultural* in some public and professional discourses. Because even if plural and plurality also refers to cultural variation, unlike multicultural it refers to cultural variation associated with modernity as it has developed during the last 200 years, mainly through individualization and secularization processes and in connection first and foremost with the development of modern urban lifestyles.

With the globalisation processes gaining speed in all sectors of society during the latest decades of the 20'th century, *pluralization* also increases. At the same time, the *character of plurality* has changed. Some of these new forms of plurality are in fact often referred to as the core characteristics of the late-modern society and postmodernity. While modernization first created a public sphere with advanced impersonal codes of interaction, the late modern situation is said to be characterized by cultural fragmentation and a pluralization within the person. The result is *the plural self* (Meyer 1992) Another characteristic of the late-modern situation often mentioned, is the way new forms of communication – internet and the MSN to mention two forms I am familiar with - have loosened the ties between identity and locality: Where identity used to be rooted and closely knit to local communities and locally anchored ideational systems like Christianity in various forms or socialist ideology as in the labor movement, identity in the post-modern situation is more likely to be based in non-localized lifestyles and imagined communities, offering the sense of belonging to virtual communities as they appear in the new media. In the late modern urban setting, identity and lifestyle is often described as *constructed of assembled elements from a variety of meaning systems and cultural references that the individual have chosen personally*. These elements can be accessible through the TV-media, travels, family, friends or for that matter – ones ethnic or religious community.

Out of these identification processes has grown a form of plurality which by some is called individual plurality (Engen 1995), by others modern plurality (Skeie 1995). When members of society increasingly have their social ties to locally based, obligatory community relations loosened, a parallel process tend to be that their personal values and norms increasingly will be disconnected from greater, but locally based meaning systems. Instead they tend to be loosely and implicitly connected to what I would call shifting contexts. This implies that the ideal type late modern individual carries with her values, norms for action and lifestyles that are like interchangeable packages of social competence which can be activated and deactivated according to what is required in shifting situations. Whether this description can be said to be valid for a greater or smaller percentage of the Norwegian population, and whether we are talking here about qualitative changes in society justifying the term post-modern or not, is disputed. But anyhow – that there is a tendency of plurality moving into the persons mind and of locality loosing its importance as a point of reference in peoples lives, I think is an empirical fact. To a large degree it is also true that there is a greatly increased liberty for the individual in choosing his and her values and norms and lifestyles and combinations of them. This will tend to make everyday situations all the time more unforeseeable, which in turn requires new social competence in handling ambiguity and potential insecurity in social situations. Further, when relevant code and norms of behaviour to a lesser extent are given by the situation itself, and become open to the interpretation by shifting participants, the demand for competence in *negotiation over code and style*, to hold up for oneself *different alternatives for dominant code* and to be aware of *alternative hypothesises for how to interpret* the suggestions of others, also become increasingly important.

Cultural and plural encounters

This kind of situation where code is not given but negotiable among the present participants - in sum, a situation that in a special way point to modern plurality and a late-modern situation - I will suggest to label a *plural encounter*. It focuses on the individual subject with a relatively high *emotional freedom* from tightly woven and holistic norm systems as well as a *high degree of independence* in their daily lives in relation to social ties and commitments towards primary groups.

Having tried to give a description of some dominant aspects of the late-modern situation and what kind of social competence is required to handle it, what strikes me,

is that these requirements seem to cover most of what has been said to be the general goals set up for the postgraduate students of multicultural awareness (*Høgskolen i Stavanger* 1998). Among the goals set up for this course, I will mention the following:

The student shall be capable of

- applying a multicultural metaperspective on the social situations he or she is about to enter into,
- applying multiple hypothesises about the impact of multiple cultural backgrounds and the meaning of signs according to different contexts and meaning systems
- handling ambiguity and insecurity related to relevant style and cultural code of social situations
- entering into negotiations about interpretations of signs and definitions of tasks in intercultural social situations

Based on the description above of a late-modern plural society, and this list of multicultural competence, a critical question naturally arises: Do young teacher students and most experienced teachers need this so called multicultural perspective in their pedagogical practice in addition to what they already must have acquired by growing up in a late-modern plural reality?

There are at least two important answers to this:

1. One answer has to do with the *reaction of the teacher and the pupils* to a greater variety of cultural elements as such – their likeliness to attribute them as familiar, normal or "different but OK ". As we see, it is only the two first bullet points above that go beyond what we already have defined as skills and knowledge that young people acquire growing up in late modernity. But in my opinion these two point are the ones that constitute the core of what I would denote multicultural awareness. The point here is, that

- the mere exposure to a greater part of the global cultural variation,
- training in reflections over and finding adequate ways of systematizing this immense resource of cultural traits, and
- to take part in discussions and criticisms on new cultural patterns

are all important contributions both in teacher training and upbringing.

2. The other answer has to do with *the situation where cultural differences become an issue or a problem* in a social situation. There may be many reasons for this to happen. It may happen out of a sudden feeling among participants of breaking a moral code. It might also be a result of an intended strategic move by one of the participants or it might simply be that the task or agenda set up for the event is to present and discuss possible problems related to cultural differences. In all such situations of course, cultural knowledge is important since it may increase peoples capacity to empathise with each other despite different socio-cultural backgrounds. Important variables in describing this type of social situation are:

- The extent to which cultural elements function as identity marks and metonyms of belonging (for the person herself) to an ethnic or religious community
- The extent to which the individual participant appear in a social situation as a representative with strong factual or felt demands of loyalty to his or her community
- The extent to which ones belongings, social obligations, and ones collective identities are possible to under-communicate in social situations

When such elements to a significantly strong degree are characteristic of a social situation, my suggestion is to apply the term *cultural encounter*.

My suggestion then is to define cultural encounter the following way:

> *The cultural encounter is a situation where cultural differences between the participants becomes relevante or an expressed issue,*

One important point for me to emphasise is that this type of situations are *also* quite frequent and normal in the late-modern Norwegian society. Thor Ola Engen (Engen 1995) refers to them as expressions or consequences of group plurality. He stresses the point that the Norwegian parliament in fact has given quite radical guidelines for the national integration in terms of supporting ethnic minorities in the country in their efforts to maintain and further develop their cultural heritage and the collective identities of their members (Report to the Norwegian Parliament nr. 39 1987-88)[1].

[1] This report confirms the immigration policy labelled *integration* which was first introduced in the NOU nr. 8 1986: "The adaptation of refugees to the Norwegian society" and which is defined in opposition *assimilation* and characterized by not only tolerance but active government support for ethnic minorities – new groups as well as natives – to maintain and develop their cultural heritage and make it relevant in public life. Later, a new report on the immigration policies has emphasised the individual side of integration and especially pointed out the rights and duties of the individual immigrant to improve his or her language and cultural competencies in order

Further - religious dialogue often takes the form of cultural encounters. Such dialogues are characterized by an explicit reference to the different value and belief systems of the partners. The Curriculum of Religious Education since the School reform of 1997 can be said to appeal to school administrations and teachers to expose children of all faiths and denominations to a wider religious landscape and to some extent also to invite them into social situation where people tell about their faith and their religious practice. A possible outcome for both majority and minority children that are frequently exposed to systematic differences between groups, is the kind of reflexive identity Sissel Østberg hase found among Pakistan children in Oslo and which she calls *Integrated Plural Identity* (Østberg 2000).

But the cultural encounter also has a long history in Norway as it has in other Western-European societies. As Skeie points out, the cultural encounter in this sense used to be a quite normal situation in earlier stages of modernity, characterized by a traditional form of plurality. A not to distant example of what I understand by traditional plurality could be the interplay between social classes in the 50-ies and 60-ies of the last century and the quite polarized class struggle situation between a self-confident and well organized labour movement and their opponents, especially in the first half of the last century. These situations are characterized by culture becoming an issue explicitly in dialogue or implicitly in the consciousness of the participants. Because of both parties loyalty towards and the feeling of being a representative of different cultural groups – it being an ethnic minority, a religious group or simply ones colleagues at a public office - the situation tend to take the form of cultures or social systems communicating, more than two individuals in an interpersonal encounter.

But –This is not the way the concept "kulturmøte" generally is being used today. First of all – my reading hase shown that the term tend to be used without defining it at all[2]. Instead, since the concept is mostly used in a context of minority issues and integration related to immigrants and refugees from non-western countries, there is a danger that we end up with an implicit understanding that cultural encounter is the kind of

---

to be able to compete for jobs on an equal basis and get equal access to public goods (report to the Norwegian parliament nr. 17 1996 –97).

[2] Among the Norwegian titles the last ten years that use the term are the following: Eidheim, H. og Stordal V. (1998), Eriksen, T.H. & Sørheim, T.A. (1994), Fuglestad, O.L. & Mørkeseth, E.I. (1992*):,* Wilhelmsen, Solveig (1999):

situation where Norwegians and "immigrants" or "foreigners" interact or are present in the same situation. This very general way of defining a situation in any other discourse on sociological issues would have been judged as very poor sociology. Many other, most relevant aspects of almost any situation such as interests, power, personal recourses, positions in relation to tasks, statuses, a common professional language – all these elements are typically ignored or left aside, while one single element is excessively highlighted – the issue which is assumed to represent metonymically "the culture" of the participants: ethnicity, color of skin, place of birth or origin, mother tong, religious identity and so forth.

My suggestion on the contrary has been to give the term a more precise definition so that the fact that these situations might turn out to be quite difficult, that they sometimes require special training and skills and that they can become very unpleasant for all participants if they are not handled well, are brought to the forefront. But this in turn implies that a cultural encounter also can be a situation one would want to avoid – be it for the sake of the individuals themselves or for the sake of the general common good or the tasks to be handled in the situation. Multicultural competence, then, should be defined not only as the competence in acting professionally in job situations that take the form of a cultural encounter. Of equal importance should be the awareness of the possibility to influence a social situation so that a cultural encounter can be avoided if not wanted or that it can be a professional job to affect or inspire social situations to develop into cultural encounters if wanted. Then the professional also need to be prepared to guide or facilitate the situation in a way that makes it become functional for certain defined purposes.

To sum up this part, I suggest that the term cultural encounter is reserved for situations where collective identities become activated in an explicit or implicit way. mainly in the sense that the participants in a social situation act more on behalf of one of their important reference groups than on behalf of them selves as individual persons. Consequently, what becomes important in further identifying a cultural encounter are aspects like the participants degree of identification, loyalty and formal or informal responsibility for the groups involved.

To stress this one more time - an important point here is that a cultural encounter is not in itself a social phenomenon that should be judged negatively or positively. Such judgments must always be related to specific, empirical cases and they should be taken by the participants themselves or for that matter outside observers on the basis of criteria like personal interests and values involved, probable outcome, danger of getting out of control, functionality in relation to the situation specific tasks that are to be handled etc.

The *cultural encounter* can be distinguished from *plural encounters* in that the element of belonging and loyalty to groups is minimized in the latter and where the negotiation about how to define the situation to a great extent is limited to situation-specific issues. Further the *(inter-)cultural encounter* can be analytically distinguished from the *intra-cultural encounter* where loyalty, sense of belonging to - and reference to - a common, cultural meaning system are outstanding characteristics of the situation. The probably most typical situation to serve as an illustration for the *intra-cultural encounter* is the *religious meeting* or service. But – a meeting between a social servant and a client in the local social welfare office might equally well take the form of an *intra-cultural encounter* when none of the rules and regulations and none of the roles offered and played by are questioned. In fact it is also reasonable to say that the *plural encounter* - when "settled" in its intersubjective agreement concerning code - also takes the form of an *intra-cultural encounter*

Some comments on the use of *cultural encounter* in resent research

In her doctoral thesis "Interkulturell dynamikk i Kulturmøtet" Marita Svane defines "kulturmøte" as "The encounter between people with different cultural backgrounds". (Svane 2004) With such a wide definition there is of course a high risk that the concept ends up covering such a great part of social life in late-modern western societies, that it looses all distinctive function an becomes meaningless. This is even more so since Svane bases her description of everyday life in Denmark on Gullestrups culture-pluralistic view where society is described as a conglomerate of subcultures of many types and on many levels. This description seem very much in line with what I have tried to describe myself as the late-modern reality.

Now – to avoid this problem of a too widely defined concept, Svane delimits cultural encounter in a parallel way that Gudykunst and Dahl delimit Intercultural Communication (Dahl 2001). They see intracultural and intercultural communication

as the extremities on a continuum defined by more or less congruence or overlap between the cultural meaning systems of the communicators. Cultural encounters then become encounter between people with *sufficiently* different cultural backgrounds.
As a preliminary way of delimiting our object, I can agree to the idea of looking at intercultural communication and intercultural encounters this way – that is to take a closer look at the cultural repertoire of the participants and on the basis of this make some general assumptions as to their potential for effective communication. But to delimit our study of such encounters to such repertoires will not give us an adequate understanding of the dynamics of this kind of situations. Peoples reservoirs are of course an important aspect of a social situation – what they bring in and might activate in the situation. But equally important in order to understand how cultural encounters develop is to study how people act, for instance how they *strategically activates* parts of their potentialities while *under-communicating* others in a social play.

In one of the two definitions of Intercultural Communication Dahl uses in "Møte mellom mennesker" (Dahl 2001) the active or strategic element in dealing with cultural differences is to some extent present.

> "*Intercultural communication is a process which implies exchange and interpretation of signs and messages between* ***people who understand themselves as representatives of cultural communities*** *that are so different that their ascription of meaning will be affected*" (Dahl 2001 s. 64)

Svane also sites this definition and thus brings in the element of *reflection over cultural differences* into her discussion on the cultural encounter. But in addition to this, I would like to follow the potential of cultural difference all the way to different types of strategic action. Because communicators are social *subjects*, they actively bring aspects of their repertoire up frontstage or hide them backstage according to what they think will best serve their personal interests, the interests of their primary reference group or the joint interests of everyone present in the situation. In that way – depending on a multitude of factors, a situation where the participants have very little in common might very well take the form of an *intra-cultural encounter*. It might as well work out in a very satisfactory way for all participants, when everyone choose to stick to the minimal code of conduct they *both master and share* in order to solve the tasks of the situation. On the contrary, people participating in the same social situation might have very overlapping cultural repertoires, but still, because of competition and lack of common interests etc., they might end up in a cultural confrontation on a

marginal issue in relation to solving the tasks: The situation becomes an *(inter)cultural encounter,* even though the participants (potentially) have a lot in common.

Now – how can the concept of cultural encounter be helpful in better understanding the way cultural differences may influence for instance the teaching profession and the everyday school situation?

First of all, I think it is important not only to focus on *who people are* (as characterized by their cultural repertoire) but to give equally attention to *what people do.* That is to focus on what people *strive to achieve*, what *definitions of the situation they choose* – or feel obliged to - adopt and *how they finally act* in spesific social situations. When it comes to defining a situation as intra- or intercultural, I think we have to focus more on the participants as *competent, strategic social actors* with positions, interests and power than as *communicators* with certain given characteristics.

From this more sociological perspective, we see people who act in social situations with a purpose, often with the aim of maximising a scarce resource. And the issue of *sharing* and *negotiating about meaning* – the *siginification* process that has to come before *transaction* - becomes more of an instrumental one.

Conclusion

My suggestion, then, is to delimit the use of the concept *cultural encounter* or "kulturmøte" to the special type of situations where *cultural differences between the participants becomes relevant or an expressed issue*. At the same time I suggest to "rehabilitate concepts like *culture conflict" and cultural confrontations* as special variations of this main phenomenon.

To relate this specifically to the education sector, I will state the following: There is clearly a need to strengthen the cultural awareness among teacher students as students of other professions in public sector. I will especially emphasise the importance of becoming familiar with cultural brokerage – that is actively seeking dialogue on cultural differences that hampers cooperation between for instance a public servant and a client, and to facilitate that dialogue. Part of this competence is to choose the right time and place for such encounters. Further, it is to facilitate the dialogue, for instance by helping parents to get to know each others most important values, to let

them meet in a safe, neutral place and event and thereby help them to trust each other and to relax. Finally, brokerage requires cultural knowledge an awareness. The broker need to have an idea about relevant cultural differences - what is "culturally neutral, possible, difficult or impossible" within each group.

So, an important part of multicultural awareness is the familiarity with and knowledge of different social groups and their cultural characteristics – we could call it *ethnographic knowledge*. This requires that somebody make good, updated and relevant ethnography and it calls for a closer cooperation between scientists and professional practitioners and between the scientific and professional discourses: Such ethnographic descriptions need to be based on scientific research method, it should be explicitly *preliminary* in its pretensions while bringing *plausible hypothesises* with danger signs on them: "not to be applied uncritically and without reference to the situation, the tasks, individual differences and the greater socio-cultural context".

Such studies should be undertaken in minorities as well as the majority group ethnically speaking, it should focus on many different subgroups and subcultures in the Norwegian society; religious, ethnic, regional, occupational and so forth. Of course – many serious social scientists have experienced that their carefully constructed and presented empirical studies have been misused to over-generalize and to make false assumptions concerning individuals. This might have led to suppressive attitudes and actions in intercultural encounters. But the fact that it is difficult and that there are many pitfalls in the project of giving probable, functional, reasonable descriptions of a social group, should not lead us to refrain from the whole enterprise as such. It should rather lead to more emphasis of making even better ethnography and to work even harder on how to present it. The challenge is to make the reader curious about the ways and beliefs of other people; how they differ and maybe for what historical or contextual reason. And for the teacher and other professional readers – such empirical descriptions of different aspects of life in the late-modern western society should be relevant and inspire further local "investigations" and practical suggestions as to further improve professional practice.

References

Dahl, Øyvind (2001): *Møter mellom mennesker. Interkulturell kommunikasjon*. Oslo: Gyldendal.

Eidheim, H. og Stordal V. (1998): *Kulturmøte og terapi i Sápmi*. Kárásjohka: Davvi girji.

Engen, Thor Ola m.fl. (1995): *Opplæring i et flerkulturelt Norge,* NOU nr. 12, Oslo

Eriksen, T.H. & Sørheim, T.A. (1994) : *Kulturforskjeller i praksis,* TANO, Oslo

Fuglestad, O.L. & Mørkeseth, E.I. (1992*): Kommunikasjon som møte mellom kulturer*. Tidvise skrifter: organisasjon og ledelse, nr. 5 1992, Stavanger: Avdeling for kultur og samfunnsfag ved Høgskolesenteret i Rogaland

Gudykunst, William B. (1998): Bridging differences. Effective intergroup communication*. 3. utg. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.*

Haus, Sigurd, Skeie, G. & Johannessen, Ø.L. (2003): *Kulturformidling fra internasjonale arenaer. Et bidrag til meningsutveksling om kultur.* Senter for kulturstudier, Norges Forskningsråd. Kristiansand: Høyskoleforlaget

Jensen, Iben (1998): *Interkulturel kommunikation i komplekse samfund.* Roskilde: Roskilde Universitetsforlag.

Meyer, Wilna A.J. (1992): *The plural self.* British Journal of Religious Education Vol 17 (2) 92-99.

Skeie, Geir (1995): "*Plurality and pluralism – a challenge for religious education*", British Journal of Religious education Vol 17, no 2

Studieplan for Norsk Lærerakademis Semesteremne i interkulturell forståelse, 1998

Studieplan for Videreutdanning i flerkulturell forståelse Høgskolen i Oslo 1997.

Studieplan for Videreutdanning i flerkulturell forståelse Høgskolen i Stavanger 1998

Svane, Marita (2004): *Interkulturel Dynamik i Kulturmødet. En Fænomenologisk Individorienteret Analyse og Forståelse*. Aalborg: Aalborg Universitet.

The Norwegian government (1988): *Om innvandringspolitikken* (Report to the Norwegian Parliament nr. 39 1987-88)

The Norwegian government (1996): *Om innvandring og det flerkulturelle Norge* (Report to the Norwegian Parliament nr. 17 1996-97)

Wilhelmsen, Solveig (1999): "Sosialt arbeid på samisk" i *Embla* nr. 4 1999

Østberg, Sissel (2000): *Islamic Nurture and Identity Management: The Lifeworld of Pakistani Children in Norway* i British Journal of Religious Education, vol.22:2 spring 2000

Kari Mari Jonsmoen and Marit Greek

The missing link between education, integration and work – a matter of inadequate communication skills?

One of the main goals of Oslo University Collage is to become a multicultural institution. In order to achieve this, there is an agreement within the institution to aim for an environment where everybody, regardless of gender, social-, ethnic or linguistic background can feel comfortable, learn, develop and succeed as students and as future professionals. The institution aim at developing an environment that enables the students to study and cooperate on equal grounds/conditions. This is necessary in order to meet the demands of today's society.

The student population at OUC has been heterogeneous for at least ten years. Today, around 12 % of the total number of students (amounting to approximately 1000 students), are linguistic minorities. The heterogeneous learning environment indicates a great potential and an opportunity to experience and learn how to cope with multiculturalism, to appreciate diversity and to develop cross-cultural communication skills. However, we have not taken advantage of the situation and the heterogeneous student-population is still an unused resource when it comes to develop communication skills in a multicultural society. Instead we have tended to concentrate on ways in which linguistic minority students can be helped to adapt their practices to the ones of the institution. In this way diversity tends to become an overwhelming barrier.

What are we told

The linguistic minority students themselves tell us that:

- they feel excluded and marginalized or they exclude and marginalize themselves

- they feel that the majority students consider them as stupid and as a burden to them
- they feel afraid and insecure
- they lack self-confidence
- they are discouraged and stigmatized by the way the institutions offer help in the form of special courses for linguistic minority students

From the tutor's point of view, the situation is described like this:

- "linguistic minority students do not understand what it is to be engaged and to be responsible for their own learning process.
- "how on earth have they been given access to higher education"
- "they take all our time if we allow them to"
- "they do not have appropriate linguistic skills"
- "they take no initiative"
- "the Norwegian students suffer because of them"

How we have dealt with the situation

There are, as far as we can see, mainly two ways of dealing with this:

1. continue to include special groups of students by helping them to adjust to the existing learning environment - this means: the linguistic minority students have to adjust to the learning institution
2. adjust the curriculum and the tuition to the entire, multicultural student population

In the educational institutions, there has been a tendency to focus on the first point. Meaning that the perceived problems are the learners themselves rather than how the educational institutions respond to the needs of these students. The conventions of OUC and thereby of the majority are taken as given. It appears that we assume that the institution has a relatively homogeneous culture, whose norms and practices have simply to be learned to provide access. The minority become the ones to be blamed, the ones who must adapt. It seems as if we are aiming for a mono-cultural institution instead of a multicultural institution.

Subsequently, OUC have, over the years, made several efforts to support the linguistic minority students' language acquisition, their study skills and communication skills in a Norwegian academic context. The students have asked for guidance at our centre, individually or in groups. Some of the students have come because of a personal desire

to gain skills and knowledge, but mostly they have been told by their tutor to come to us. We have believed that support and guidance would lead to integration by smoothing some of the difficulties. But the reports from both the students and from the tutors show us that this has not worked out the way we thought that it would do.

A special educational approach?

At the Centre for Multicultural and International Studies we constantly get the question *How to teach linguistic minorities.* It seems to be an underlying conviction that a different, special educational approach is needed when it comes to the minority students. One has to ask whether the minority students learn in a different way than the majority students do. This gives evidence to the assumption that the minority students are a homogeneous group of students and that they all have the same needs. The great problem, however, is that these students are just as different as everybody else. They have personal learning strategies, linguistic and academic skills at different levels. There is no single method suitable for the linguistic minority students, there are many. Not all of the linguistic minority students need to develop the same set of skills and knowledge. The linguistic minorities have just as different needs as the rest of the students. Norwegian language is the main problem of only a few of the students.

It is impossible to create stimulating and broadening relations if we divide in speech and in practice, the students in "them" and "us", and in "minority" "majority" and "in Norwegians" and "those with a different linguistic background". By using this vocabulary and by consequently offering special treatment to certain groups, we sustain the diversity. The traditional students (the majority students) are regarded as the normal students and in this way we automatically create abnormal students.

This way of acting divides the learning environment. In this way we implicitly tell the students that some of them lack the basic skills that are required. Because of this, they are incapable of meeting the demands of the educational institution. If the students want to be part of the learning community, they have to change! We meet the challenge as an individual problem and treat it as a kind of pathology. The minority

students have managed to get admission to study and thus once were regarded as good enough, with the required skills – but suddenly this does not count. This message is perceived by the majority students as well. The idea of first-rate and second-rate students is strengthened.

Nobody wants to be second-rated and stigmatized. Neither do the linguistic minorities. They wish to be treated equally. They do not wish to attend to special offers – and especially not to special courses in language acquisition. Special tuition to specific groups of students is interpreted as a segregation practice. This is inconsistent with the wish to create a multicultural environment where everybody regardless of gender, social, ethnic or linguistic background can feel comfortable and succeed as students and as future professionals.

Linguistic skills – the crucial point?

Through our work at SEFIA we have experienced that the language skills of the minority students, though of course crucial to learning, is not the most important issue. Many of the students in fact really have quite acceptable language skills, but still are frustrated participants in the learning environment. The majority of the non-native speakers at OUC have attended Norwegian schools and do not need to attend a Norwegian course. What they need is to practice the language in different situations within a professional context.

Research at OUC shows how students who differ from the so-called normal students, for example linguistic minorities, are given the role of non-participants in the environment. There are several examples of how diversity creates difficulties when the students work together on different topics and how the institution deals with these problems. For instance, we have experienced that minority students sometimes are given permission to work individually when teamwork actually is required. In this way the institution maintains a so-called normal situation where the *abnormal* do not disturb the *normal* students and the tutors are free from problems they are not ready to face. Teamwork goes on in an easy way when those who participate are mostly equal and similar. It does not seem to bother neither the tutors nor the students, that they

miss the opportunity to get new perspectives, new knowledge and develop important communication skills.

Consequently, some students are never heard and never given an opportunity to develop properly as a professional. Students are given permission to take the role as a passive and remain silent. Neither fellow-students nor tutors are curious to be familiar with their experiences and opinions, or interested in bringing these into the community of learning. The fact that some students are made invisible in this way strengthens oppression and creates divergent students in our minds.

When different voices are speaking up, different meanings are expressed as well. The question is whether the institution wishes to consider diverging ideas and attitudes, and make them valid. Our question is: is the culture of the subject field really defined once and for all, is it unchangeable and unaffected of the increasing multicultural society? Is our mission as an educational institution to help new generations to speak, write and think as if the culture of education is a static, homogeneous culture?

Managing multiculturalism

The students avoid cross-cultural communication, as they have probably done in earlier schooldays. Working together in theoretical and practical studies seems to be a great challenge with which they are unable to cope. It is hard to see the resources in diversity.

The students need support and guidance in their efforts to communicate as equals. They need to learn how to support one another and cooperate, despite of the differences in language skills and interpretation. But the educational staffs too need support in their work with these challenges in order to contribute to the development of multicultural competence among the students. They find it difficult to teach and to guide the increasingly diverse population. They tend to continue their praxis as if nothing has changed, as if the student population is the same as when they were students 30 years ago. To change is hard. The habit is in our minds and in our actions, and if we try to change our habits we cannot be sure to succeed immediately. And in

every day life there is not much time to collaborate with other teachers or to exchange experiences.

It seems clear to us that providing extra language instruction is not the solution to achieve integration. All the students, but in particular the linguistic minorities, are in need of support to establish the confidence and emotional security to succeed. They need continuous guidance in cooperating with fellow students who may have different backgrounds. This can not be emphasized enough. There is no doubt that multicultural communication skills are necessary in today's professional life and this ought to be learned in educational institutions.

This is an important task for the educational staff and we have all got the opportunity right in front of ourselves. We just have to grab the possibilities, utilize the surroundings and the situations that occur. In this way we will be confronted with some of the challenges we wish to escape from. This will give us an opportunity to participate in different situations with diverse people. We all need each other, but we need to practise, to reflect and to theorize. We have to go the inductive way.

A lot of research has been done. However, the educational institutions tend to deal with the challenges of multiculturalism as a matter of theoretical knowledge. Thus, the relevant abstract knowledge remains purely theoretical. Unfortunately the knowledge remains decoupled from any practical issue instead of required skills. A multicultural learning environment still seems as a distant goal. There is therefore an urgent need of change in the culture of higher education. It is in time to adjust both methods and curriculum in higher education, to meet the needs of an increasingly heterogeneous society as well as the student population. The necessary competence among tutors is essential in order to take an effective part in this improvement. Our main task is to enable the development of a culture which empowers both students and tutors effectively to use the resources and opportunities of the entire culture. Diversity is not something we have to get rid of, on the contrary, diversity must be regarded as desirable and normal. Such an approach would improve the quality of learning.

It has to be regarded as completely natural to adjust lectures and tuition to the existing student population. In both written and spoken language, we all have to consider the fact that the participants have different mother tongues. We will have to adjust the curriculum and the disciplinary demands. Diverging thoughts and divergent literacy must be given credit, value and space in the educational institution and within the individuals participating. One of our students expressed it like this: *To understand us, maybe the tutors need to attend a course in how to read diverging texts.* Another student explained that the tutors wanted her to write along with the sun, but she was used to writing the other way round. The result was the same, so why emphasize these technical and instrumental parts of writing? Why focus on surface features like spelling, grammar and structure? Is it not possible to view writing more as a matter of disciplinary knowledge, personal interpretation and as an expression of identity and social practice? In our opinion this is a matter of our own lacking of skills. We are disturbed and confused when we are to read a text written in an unfamiliar way and in a new and different Norwegian. What we automatically respond to is the deficiencies and we fail to perceive the meaning of the text. We do not know how to communicate, neither in written nor in spoken language, with people who use the Norwegian language in a different way than ourselves, people who think differently and who behave differently. But by learning this and by discovering new perspectives, we will learn a lot, as human-beings as well as professionals.

Thus, in our opinion, one of the crucial missing links in education, integration and work is the lack of adequate communication skills among both the majority and the minority.

Hannelore Küpers

Globally Minded Economists, but Ethnocentric Engineers?

Higher education prepares students for an international business world as well as for future positions in management. Intercultural Management Competence, thus, represents an important element in business study programs, not in every single one but at least in many.

In the debate of how to professionalise Human Resource Management we apparently miss the point that many managers in production or service areas are engineers and not economists or former business students from their academic backgrounds. In Engineering Sciences we still find the situation that within the present core curriculum students rarely get the possibility to develop basic competences in how to interact with people in general, nor do these curricula prepare for national and international diversity.

That is why international internships and studies abroad are in great demand among employers and students and, actually, they already form parts of many academic study programs. At the same time the university campus is becoming more and more international. Nevertheless, only few universities offer seminars teaching students how to develop the competences necessary to deal with demographic changes successfully as much as to create constructive environments for international labour relations.

The University of Applied Sciences in Bochum (with the faculties of Architecture, Civil Engineering, Electronical Engineering and Informatics, Mechanical Engineering and Mechatronics, Landscape Engineering, and finally Business and Management) is exploring another direction. With approx. 20 percent international students, 25 percent women and a growing number of lateral entrants (with or without first degrees), this institution offers a certain level of diversity at least on the student level, and students accept the challenges of international cooperation more and more. Therefore, like many other academic institutions, the Fachhochschule Bochum defines internationality as a fundamental quality of its institutional culture and profile and if

we look at recent statistical data, the institution is indeed increasingly seen as being international from the outside.

For two years, the Institute of Future-Oriented Competences (IZK) at the University of Applied Sciences in Bochum has been testing a study program which has two objectives: to prepare all students, but mainly those of engineering
for international assignments and
for the cooperation with international or host-country team members.
The program not only aims to develop social and communicative competences but it is also oriented towards an increasing national and international diversity at the workplace.

At present, the program consists of eleven learning modules and is continuously reviewed and enhanced. This enables the students to develop a basic learning ability and employability in a globalising economy.

Moreover, the program is accompanied by several empirical studies on learning and communication styles. The author will present the study program as well as some research results.

Table of contents:

1 Higher Education of Engineering and Key Qualifications

1.1 General Remarks

Skills in teaming, communication and self-management are nowadays highly demanded in any Engineering position and you will find them in every employment appraisal. The German Association of Engineers (VDI) requires up to 20 % of the academic study program for soft skills qualification. The Bologna Process and International Quality Assurance Associations guarantee a good mixture of hard and soft skills in higher (academic) education.

But reality is still falling short of this: The actual study programs of Engineering Sciences in Germany have great difficulties to reach 5 % in training of key qualifications and in order to reach this meagre percentage they usually include language courses. During the first two years of study (junior studies in the undergraduate program) students are rarely trained in team situations or projects. Like in many secondary schools, you will find the ridiculous situation that during the first academic study period students have to neglect their team skills they already developed before because they are not asked to use them within their academic training.

How can we explain this condition? Talking with colleagues responsible for curriculum planning, we often hear that

there is still a lack of awareness for the basic needs of key qualifications within faculties (older and younger lecturers) and among students, or
they think soft skills are those kinds of qualifications students will get at work or
they justify it pointing out the financial limits for hiring a specialist in soft skills training or
since the change towards a bachelor/master system they have not seen enough space for adding this type of learning to the already reduced core program (in relation to the former German *Diplom* degree) and cut the soft skills program they already introduced into the gradually superseded academic curriculum of the *Diplom*.

So, when at university students of Engineering in Germany hardly get a basic training in soft skills up until today.

As we know from many organizational studies, large companies are still investing into the career planning of their trainees, including programs of soft skills development. Normally corporations do inhouse training offering programs of continuing education. But the German economy is highly based on SMEs (small and medium-sized enterprises). They generally do not have the same possibilities and especially in times of cost cutting they hardly invest into courses which are not seen as technically indispensable. That is one reason why universities are more and more asked to offer those courses during the normal academic program. Although companies are saving a lot of money in transferring their needs (of basic professional and further education) onto the back of the higher education system they themselves rarely contribute financially to the higher education training.

Concerning human resource management the situation seems to be similar. When we look through the academic study programs of Engineering Sciences we may sometimes find a basic course in business and organization, sometimes also project management, but usually reduced to the more technical part of work organisation, rarely enriched with human resource management aspects. Currently, students of Engineering normally finish their academic career without any idea about how to manage people.

The situation is even worse, however, with intercultural competences: Although students may still stand a good chance[3] to study a fraction of the core program abroad or to realize an internship in a company outside the country, most of those students leave the country without any meaningful preparation. At least, some go abroad with a basic language preparation, but few of them with a broader introduction to what we call ”intercultural competence”. Therefore many of these students return with more stereotypes and prejudices than they had before leaving – corroborated by many psychological studies (Stadler, Thomas et al.).

One argument often used in this context is that the majority of our students will remain inside the home country and would not need to adapt to different mentalities and

[3] Within the restructuring process towards the bachelor/master system many universities are cutting these possibilities, because of the shorter study program.

different environments. This opinion, however, ignores that young engineers, as much as older ones, are confronted with a global demographic change leading to migration and mixed cultures. Today, people have to work with colleagues, heads and subordinates but also with partners and customers from different cultural backgrounds even if they do not cross the national border. Gender and age variation have to be considered more and more within the workplace during the next decades. The same applies to differences in world vision, religion, life style and diverse professional and social or educational backgrounds.

1.2 The University of Applied Sciences in Bochum

The University of Applied Sciences in Bochum is mostly a technically oriented institution, offering careers of different kinds of Engineering Sciences such as Architecture, Civil Engineering, Electronical Engineering and Informatics, Mechanical and Mechatronical as well as Landscape Engineering and there is a large Faculty of Business and Management, too.

In total, the University has about 4,200 students: 20% with foreign passports (and a number of Germans grown up outside the country or with foreign parents and German passports) and 25% female students. There is also a growing number of older students, coming back to the University at the age of 30, 40, or 50 in order to upgrade their career prospects either in the disappearing *Diplom* system or starting a master's degree. The faculties, however, only have a small number of international colleagues among the teaching staff and also only a small number of women.

Taking into account the student diversity in relation to the insignificant variation among the faculties we can easily suppose how decisions are made if anyone wanted to renew the academic program of Engineering towards a more international and diverse profile.

Yet in 1999 a new Institute was integrated into the organizational structure: the Institute of Future-Oriented Competences (IZK), which from then on had to play the role of service station for the whole university.[4] As an enhancement to the core

[4] If you would like to know more about the Institute, please visit our homepage at www.fh-bochum.de/izk/.

program, the IZK offers the possibility of soft skills qualifications to every faculty or student, especially in social, communicative and methodical competences. Increasing the academic staff, a program for national and international diversity career planning has been developed since 2003.

2 The Intercultural Management Program

2.1 Objectives and Organization

The main objective of the "Intercultural Management Program" is to give to the students a basic understanding in diversity aspects of human resource management as well as to prepare them for international diversity management at the same time enabling them to live in at least partly unknown environments. Students of all faculties, but specially from the faculties of Engineering, are invited to choose between currently eleven free courses/units and may follow three different pathways,

Communication
Culture (expatriate preparation and basic knowledge on cultural matters)
Work Organisation/Management

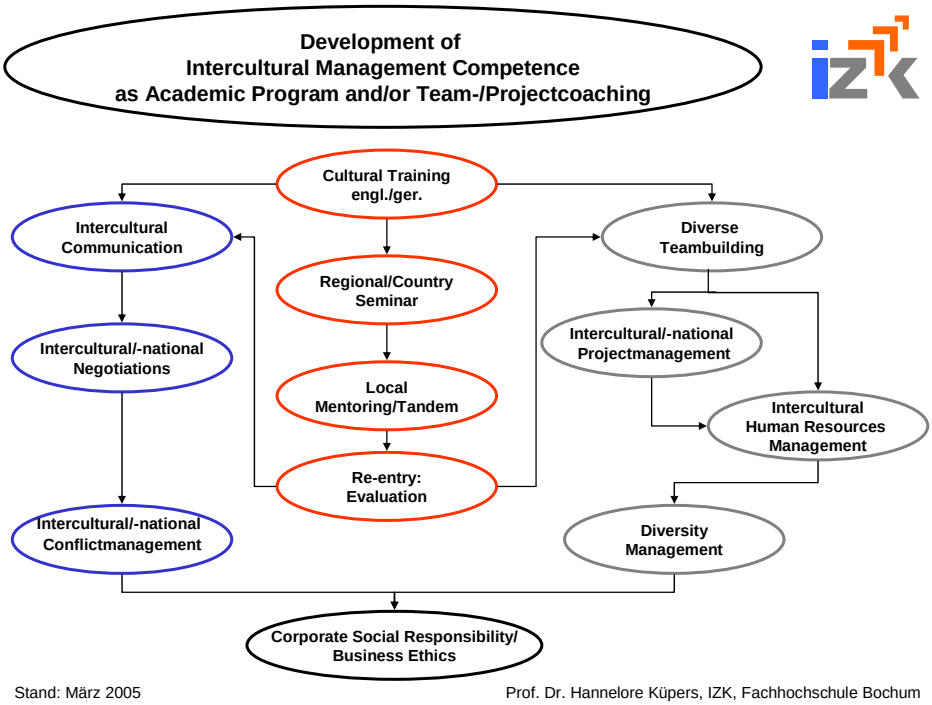


Fig.I: The Program for Intercultural Management Competence at the University of Applied Sciences in Bochum/Germany

In each pathway students may build up a special qualification, and if wanted, they select the courses or they may do all of them. We started the program in 2003 and are meanwhile well accepted among a raising number of students with both interests: to prepare for overseas assignments and to prepare for diverse human resource management in general.

2.2 Theoretical Foundations

The courses are mainly based on a general approach on culture and a training methodology mix of knowledge, experiences and skills.

With reference to Hofstede (1991), we partly use his first definition of culture, which originally was not reduced to national differences, but to any groups and their cultural programmings. Consequently, we easily connect with the notions of diversity developed by Loden/Rosener and adapted by Rowe/Gardenswartz.

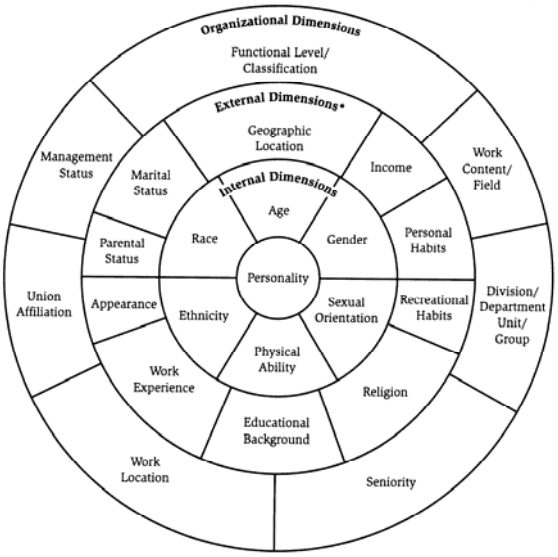


Fig.II: The Diversi from Loden/Rosener

Influenced by social constructivists, we define culture as
mental programming, but not determination, of groups and individuals
a complex of diverse mental programmings

dynamic constructions:
historically developed
changing constantly (even without systematic intervention)
which can be changed (by groups and individual persons)
cannot be predicted absolutely (concerning time and directions) and
are often contradictory and conflicting.

As human beings are complex systems (Ulrich/Probst), cultures in our view do not have always the same impact: Which programming(s)/concepts at what time and in which direction will have impact on a system and which meaning will be constructed at a particular moment depends on at least three components: Issue, Situation (time, environmental conditions) and People involved. As far as the people are concerned, they may differ in their programmings, their emotional, physical, cognitive possibilities of perception, their ability to communicate and to relate to people, their self-concepts and concepts of others, their situative constitution (attention, mood, willingness), their relationship between each other, their relationships concerning issue and environment etc. Intercultural Competence in our view is more the ability to relate positively to ourselves and to others inside and outside our own cultural environment and to create new relationships in a responsible way despite the fact that these people do not share our worldviews, attitudes to life and work. This understanding echoes more what Kramsh et al. call the “third domain”.

In this context, identity is seen more as a constantly process of change than as a fixed product (Habermas). Therefore the development of intercultural management competence mainly needs to enable students to handle complex situations: to recognize, to understand and to design complexity. Complexity could mean i.e. the intra- and interpersonal diversity of individual persons, the intra- and interorganizational diversity of companies and the intra- and international diversity of nations, continents or the globe.
In a more concrete sense, the learning objectives for this program are
to recognize one’s own programmings/concepts, to understand one’s own identity as a process and as a construction and to learn how to work on ourselves,
to recognize programmings/concepts of others, to understand their identities as process and as constructions,
to develop a framework to live and work with others and to create commonalities and new ways of living and working.

The guiding methodical principle is that diversity needs the representation of diversity. This means that study programs have to represent groups in their diversity and in their process of modification as well as individuals in their inner diversity and their change process. They have to start from complex situations and regard the situation from many different perspectives. They need to show diverse alternatives to deal with and to handle diverse consequences, limits of tolerance and possible activities.

The program is developed as a process you can undergo during your academic education in order to be able to get profound knowledge, experiences and skills through the whole academic career. The training therefore is based on academic teaching (knowledge), investigative learning (experiences) and training (skills)

2.3 The Intercultural Management Profile for Engineers

Presently, students are choosing randomly among the courses we offer, mostly realized in two- or three-day programs with a certificate of successful participation. In the faculties of Civil Engineering and Business and Management, we participate with our program in an compulsory course pool, where students have to choose three or four courses and finish with an examination.

As we do have a raising number of students who participate in various courses without following a systematic approach or who even avoid to go abroad, we are developing a systematic course called **"Intercultural Management Profile for Engineers"**, which contains the following obligatory elements:

at least a one-semester internship overseas or international academic studies
at least one continuing language course
at least five courses of intercultural management (four compulsory options and at least one more elective)

During this profile-building process they all have to start with an obligatory unit of cultural training (in English), then they do two more obligatory seminars (diversity-based team building and intercultural communication). Having studied these first units we recommend to go abroad and to live their own experiences, either in companies or in academic studies. When they come back, they continue with two more units as project management, human resource management and a third one, freely chosen

among the broader program mentioned before, i.e diversity management (management profile) and/or negotiation or conflict management (communication profile).

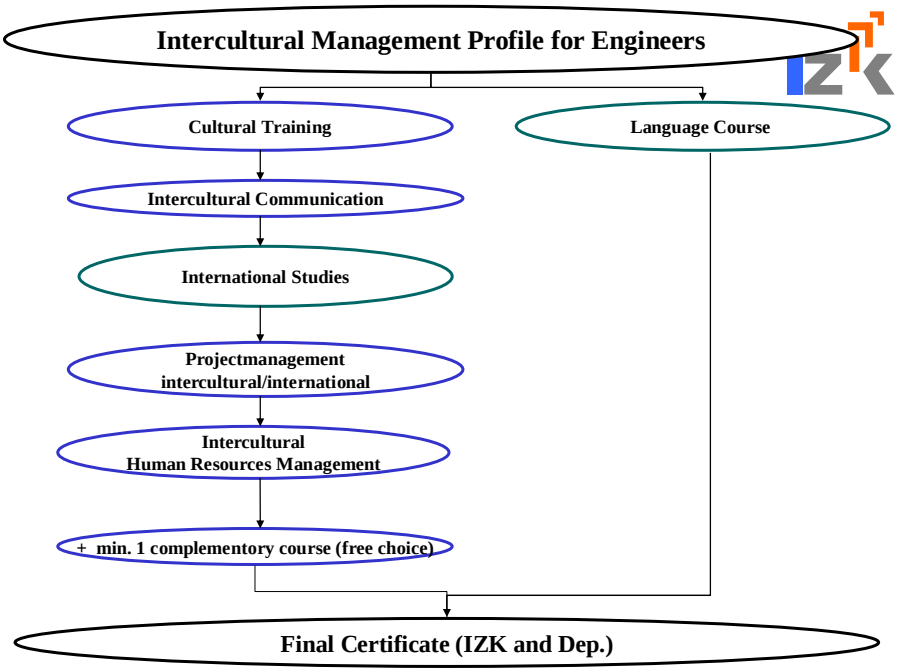


Fig.III: The Program for the Intercultural Management Profile for Engineers at the University of Applied Sciences in Bochum/Germany

To get the final certificate they also have to work on a case study based on their own experience, where they have to show that they are able to relate theory to practical experiences. At the end of their academic career students get a certificate from the faculty and from our institute about all courses and activities developed. This certificate shall offer to the participants (and to future employers) a detailed overview about their theoretical knowledge, practical experiences and skills in the field of national and international diverse human resource management and international experiences.

We will start at the beginning of next year with a marketing campaign to spread the information within the University and outside, especially among future employers.

3 Empirical Studies

The Intercultural Management Program is accompanied by several empirical studies on learning styles, team skills, communication styles and from September on we start a test measuring the degree of Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI). The following results represent the first pretest results in 2004. The main study will start in September/October 2005.

3.1 Learning Style Inventory

In a period of pretests we used the Learning Style Inventory by Kolb in two different groups of students of Engineering.

In a first experiment, we pretested 45 students of Civil Engineering at the beginning of their first semester (without asking for biographic data) and got the following results:
13 students type converger
13 students type accumulator
13 students type assimilator
6 students type diverger

In a second experiment we pretested 54 students of Electronical Engineering and Informatics at the end of their second semester (now with biographic data on age, sex, nationality and schooling background) and got the following results:
37 students type converger
8 students type accumulator
8 students type assimilator
1 student type diverger
The three international students were in the group of converger and the only diverger was the woman. There were no big differences in age.

Some possible interpretations:
Obviously, the students of Civil Engineering are quite diverse in their learning style. This may correspond to the profile of a civil engineer, who needs to fulfill a variety of tasks (project and team management, customer service, construction, process planning, negotiating and selling products). It seems that students before choosing this academic career, more or less already understood their challenge.

In the next survey we will add questions on biographical data, to discern possible differences more clearly.

We were not at all astonished by the amount of the second group of Electronical Engineering students: The profile of engineers in this field is still the very traditional view of engineering as learning by doing, high enthusiasm for technical data etc. It seems that at least male students (the same with national and international students) correspond to this profile. The problem is that the professional profile of positions in electronical engineering actually is changing very much towards that of a business manager (product management, sales engineering), especially for applicants having studied at institutions of applied sciences (Fachhochschulen). Concerning the opinion of the German Association of Engineers (VDI) today only 20 % of these applicants get a position in research and development.

Our hypothesis about the current reasons are the following:
The Faculty of Electronical Engineering still attracts the traditional mentality because they want this type of students or because they are perceived to want them.
The fact that the only diverger in this group was the only female student could mean that women are different in their learning style and/or students with different learning styles already left the faculty within the two first semesters because they do not feel at ease. Divergers, however, are strongly needed in the market place. This interpretation would correspond to other studies on gender differences in technical academic careers. Our next round in autumn 2005 will provide more details.

3.2 Team Skills Inventory:

In this experiment we used a mixed methodology based on a questionnaire for the students, several interviews/discussions with lecturers and participative observation. Last year we organized a two-day project as introduction into the career of Civil Engineering with several objectives for the first time:
Introduction to the faculty
Introduction into the professional career
Better integration within the students
Better relationships between students and lecturers

The project was a great success: Three weeks after the project, students and lecturers responded very positively and decided to incorporate this unit into the regular curriculum.
In fact, with regard to the opinion of students and lecturers, the results were:
improved integration of older students
improved communication during lectures between students and student to lecturer
more contact between the students from the first day on
different experiences with their project team, but mostly positive

At the end of the first year of studies, we passed out a second questionnaire, this time including biographical data and got the following results:
still better communication between the students in general,
sometimes difficulties to communicate between good and not as good students (level of knowledge/experiences too different?)
a lot of them still working at least partially in teams, those who quit the original team did it for different reasons:
no good cooperation
locality circumstances (difficult to meet)
organizational circumstances (different distribution in laboratory teams)
still not enough contact between students/lecturers (problem of power distance?)

As the group of students was already much smaller than at the beginning of the career, we found that those who were still in the program nearly all participated in the project at the beginning, which on one hand looks positive for the intentions of the project, but on the other hand can be seen more negatively, i.e. it might have been difficult for outsiders or for late students to become integrated.

Many international students did not answer to questions like: How could you establish contact with lecturers?; How are your expectations towards your lecturers (i.e. teaching style)?
This year in our second survey, we will go deeper to find answers to our questions.

3.3 Communication Style Inventory:

Furthermore, we realized a pretest in two different groups of students concerning their preferred communication style (analog vs. digital communication[5]):
a group of 13 master students (9 female, 4 male) in Architecture and Media Management (AMM), all of them already working as architects, are doing a course on Intercultural Communication and International Negotiation
a group of 6 *Diplom* degree students of Mechatronical Engineering and 2 business students (one female business student), participating in a course of Intercultural Communication (all preparing for international assignments)

Results:
Within the AMM students, the majority clearly belongs to the analog type, the male students clearer than the female, where at least three of them were in-between analog and digital. That could be interesting when we think about the tasks of a media manager: Could women be more flexible in changing their style? Within this group there was no international student.
Within the group of Mechatronical Engineering and business students we expected a more digital mentality and found that the majority was more analog than digital, though not as clear as among the AMM students. Two students were more digital (one male Mechatronical student and one female business student). The only international student (a student raised in Germany but with parents from Morocco) was analog type too.

The study will continue next semester, to assess differences and similarities.

3.4 Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI)

The last study will accompany our Intercultural Management Profile for Engineers with a pretest using the IDI and controlling the development of interculturality through our academic preparation, the international assignment and the language courses. Students of all careers of engineering are invited to participate. The first results will be available in 2006.

[5] Based on a questionnaire by my Japanese colleague Prof. Kishiro Hayashi/Tokyo.

IV Further Steps

Apart from the main study, which will be realized in September/October 2005, we are already working on how to innovate the didactics in higher education. Based on our program and our experiences we are already preparing what we call the paradigm shift in higher education:

1. Within the further education schemes for university teachers we are developing a detailed methodology of how to analyse our target groups within the framework of cultural diversity. Consequently university teaching in the future will start recognizing and visioning a nationally and internationally diverse studentship.

2. Step by step we concentrate on diversifying our soft skills training in general: shifting from a culturally more homogeneous to a more diverse platform concerning participants and content.

Bibliography:

Bennett, M. (1993). Towards ethnorelativism: A developmental model of intercultural sensitivity. In: R.M. Paige (Ed.). Cross-cultural orientation: New conceptualisations and applications. (pp.27-70)

Habermas, J. (1997). Die Einbeziehung des Anderen. Frankfurt

Hayashi, K. (2003). Analog and Digital Communication Style Inventory. Presented in his workshop at SIIC, Portland/USA 2003

Hofstede, G. (1991). Cultures and Organizations – Software of the mind. London

Kolb, D. A. (1984). Experiential Learning. Englewood Cliffs

Kramsh, C. (1999). Global and Local Identities in the Contact Zone. In: Gnutzmann, C. (Ed.) (1999). Teaching and Learning English as a Global Language. Native and Non-native Perspectives. Tübingen.

Loden, M./Rosener, J. (1991). Workforce America. Homewood

Gardenswartz, L./Rowe, A./Digh, P./Bennett, M. (2003). The Global Diversity Desk Reference. Managing an International Workforce. San Francisco

Stadler, P. (1994). Globales und Interkulturelles Lernen in Verbindung mit Auslandsaufenthalten. Saarbrücken

Thomas, A. (Hrsg.) (1994). Psychologie und multikulturelle Gesellschaft. Göttingen

Ulrich, H./Probst, G. (1990). Anleitung zum ganzheitlichen Denken und Handeln. Bern

Key words:
Management of national and international diversity
Professionalization of Human Resources Management
Intercultural Human Resources Management
Intercultural management
Engineering and intercultural competence
Intercultural Management Profile for Engineers
Intercultural sensitivity
Intercultural competence
Culture as constructions
Learning-styles
Team-ability
Analog and digital communication
Intercultural Development Inventory

Shirlee Marchment

The Diversity Challenge in Education. An Australian Perspective

Abstract

The vocational and educational barriers for at-risk students may lie largely within the present archaic educational system. Teachers predominately depend upon the traditional and familiar classroom strategies, learning by rote, conducting frequent assessments to measure the retention of isolated facts and using teacher-centred educational methods. Other structural barriers include, inflexible programs, narrow curriculum focus and outdated texts. While these traditional school methods may have been complementary to older capitalism, they suit neither the new capitalism nor at-risk students. The NSW Department of Education and Training acknowledges improvements in the system are essential. A community consultation is currently being conducted by the Department in an effort to address a range of issues, most notably early school leavers.

"Within the general sociological literature on contemporary Western education, it appears to be the case that students do not simply and unproblematically fail to achieve. That is failure is not located within the students themselves. Instead it resides elsewhere." (Tait 1995, 124).

It can be argued that the school experience can be an extremely negative one for those who do not 'fit' well in the system. The impact this has on the remainder of their vocational and personal lives is potentially enormous. Alternative (at-risk) programs for students who require a more tolerant, flexible learning environment allow students to succeed where they were unable to in the traditional school environment. These programs can save young people from a lifetime of disadvantage, which was largely not of their making.

Introduction

" …there is no such person as the typical early school leaver. Young people leave school for a variety of reasons….the first prerequisite for successful strategies to meet the needs of early school leavers is to cater for diversity." (Batten & Russell 1995, 54).

The definition of an 'At-Risk Student' varies between schools, governments and academics. Generally it's agreed that an at-risk student is not achieving as well as their peers in the school environment, is likely to leave school early and have poor future work prospects. The causation factors are subject to debate, although there is a multiplicity of factors that contribute to students being at-risk. Simplistically these causation factors are predominately divided between two broad categories, family/social issues and the school system/experience. While some argue that the family and social structure of the individual is largely responsible others take the view that the education system fails to engage these students. While both categories differ in their origin, the end result is that these causal factors are external to the student and largely beyond their individual control.

Programs for at-risk students may vary in their model type and their particular application, however they all have the intent of acting as the countervail against early school drop out and potential long-term unemployment. There is ample evidence that despite our attempts to address the issues of at-risk youth we still have a long way to go before we can declare our strategies a success, for example in Australia:

"In May 2004 15.5% or 214,800 teenagers were not in full-time education or full-time employment."

"teenagers not in full-time study or full-time work is the highest than anytime in the last six years."

"39,000 early school leavers (47% of Year 10 completers and 36% of Year 11 completers) in 2002 were not in study or full-time work in May 2003."

(Dusseldorp Skills Forum, 2004).

Another factor to be considered is the 'new capitalism'. This is the latest trend within our labour market. New capitalism defines what counts as useful knowledge and the implications of this upon schools and the education of all students is enormous. Knowledge as a marketable commodity in a global community requires that it is ever changing in terms of value and demand and it is transferable between countries. The new capitalism defines learning and knowledge as a life long exercise. It is essential for individuals to pursue on-going education and accreditation to remain active in the workforce. Where previously businesses depended upon labour and capital they now depend upon new knowledge and a mobile, ever-changing work force.

At-risk students are among the most disadvantaged under the new capitalism due largely to the present structural barriers they encounter in our school system, limiting their success and future employability. They are also the most unlikely to consider returning to an educational environment, due in part to their previous negative experiences in schools. Both factors will decrease the at-risk students ability to compete effectively in the new labour market. The following statement was written 50 years ago, it remains valid today.

"In these days, it is doubtful that any child may reasonably be expected to succeed in life if he is denied the opportunity of an education. Such an opportunity, where the state has undertaken to provide it, is a right which must be made available to all on equal terms*." (Warren 1954, 444).*

The right to and the need for appropriate education has long been an issue for intellectual thinkers. Plato, Socrates and Aristotle are excellent examples of the historical base in educational theory and practice. Society has generally embraced the belief that education is our primary tool for human development. In more recent times economic and labour market reforms have impacted upon education and its role and relevance for young people. Business has also played a key role in shaping community values, goals, language and beliefs. The social and economic implications of these more recent reforms are yet to be fully assessed.

There is little doubt we as a society need to implement further strategic measures to assist young people. The NSW Department of Education and Training has initiated a community consultation in an attempt to improve our education system. One of the key issues they are examining within the consultation is the levels of school disengagement among 15 – 19 year old students. (NSW Department of Education and Training, 2004).

Despite specific policies, programs and encouragement from the government, media and community, we continue to have large numbers of early school leavers. Many leave prior to gaining employment or other study options and they then tend to occupy the highest category of long-term unemployment in 15 – 19 age group.

"In May 2004, unemployment rates for Australians aged 15 –19 years were three and a half times higher than for adults aged 25 – 64 years."
(Dusseldorp Skills Forum, 2004).

A plethora of research exists on school based at-risk programs and alternative study methods. These programs often adjust the curriculum in response to the student's interests and needs i.e. more 'hands on' practical learning. The notion of curriculum relevance and continuous up-grades has also been debated and researched extensively.

"The written curriculum is but the visible, public and changing testimony of selected rationales and legitimating rhetorics of schooling. As such it both promulgates and underpins certain basic intentions of schooling as they are operationalized in structures and institutions" (Goodson, 1988, p. 16).

Goodson views the curriculum as a reflection of the community's particular political, educational and social discourse upheld as 'correct' in any given period of time. The curriculum is visible as a tool to provide rules and guidelines for schools and is not quite as visible as the legitimiser of educational decisions and operations. Selected rationales refer to the various discourses selected by those in positions of power to support the intentions of the curriculum. The legitimising rhetoric are the actions and statements made, based on the beliefs upheld within the school system of what is correct and proper. The rhetoric also assists to justify decisions made in schools in terms of funding, priorities, discipline and school culture. Goodson argues that all curriculum has a historical base with inherited 'priorities and assumptions'. Therefore, in examining curriculum and education, we need to take into account the existing beliefs and historic practices embedded in our current system.

Goodson's work is useful in explaining why the curriculum fails to cater for diversity. The underpinning belief system with its historical base precludes any methods outside of the historical teacher-centred instruction, with the result that our current school

system is inadequate. I do not intend to dwell on the curriculum debate other than to suggest that for some students the curriculum is less of an issue when compared with other factors such as teaching methodology and environmental/social discourses. As Goodson (1988) noted, these factors have hidden, historical bases which are often left unquestioned.

At-risk students are useful for the purpose of highlighting the barriers, inequalities, lack of encouragement of student diversity and the prejudices within the educational curriculum. These students also clearly portray the lack of appropriateness of the curriculum for all students in terms of its ability to appropriately equip students for their future workplaces in the new knowledge economy.

"There is widespread agreement that a more effective national youth transition system is necessary. New forms of integrated social assistance are required to enable young people, especially early school leavers, to navigate their way through labour markets and education and training systems. This effort needs to focus on encouraging early school leavers to stay on at school, developing alternative learning options within and alongside schools, and to support them in the world outside school, especially in a highly competitive labour market, if they choose to leave." (Dusseldorp Skills Forum, 2002).

The NSW Department of Education and Training have posed the following questions in their current community consultation paper:

6a. What changes are needed to keep all 15 to 19 year olds in education and training:
** In what students learn*
** In how learning is organised*
** For students in remote communities?*

6b. How can schools and TAFE work better with parents and the community to ensure that younger students remain interested, so they will stay in education and training through the 15 to 19 years period?

6c. How can schools and TAFE best work together to assist students aged 15 to 19 to achieve their goals?

6d. How can students be better prepared to make decisions about their education and training and employment pathways and to appreciate the implications of their decisions?

6e. Is there a need for an alternative or more flexible pathway for students who are likely to leave the school system early? If so, what would this look like?

(NSW Department of Education and Training, 2004).

Background

Prior to the late 1970s not a lot of interest was taken in students who failed to succeed in schools, as most of them left at the earliest opportunity. An increase in levels of youth long-term unemployment during the 1980s saw a gradual shift in government policies and the introduction of various education and training initiatives aimed at assisting school leavers to obtain work. During the 1990s the government moved its policy focus from post-school training options for youth to policies that kept young people in schools until Year 12.

Teachers increasingly have had the responsibility of working with reluctant, alienated or angry students. (Inquiry into Provision of Public Education in NSW, 2002). In response to the change of clientele and government policy, the schools sought more flexible, less academic options for students who didn't intend to proceed on to university study. This was the beginning of the blended educational/vocational based program options for students.

Several significant reports were produced in response to micro economic reforms during the early 1990s. The Finn, Mayer and Carmichael Reports were innovative for their time and vocationally orientated. They sought to link education and training with the needs of industry, to provide a comprehensive and relevant training approach. Drawing on the Mayer Committee's competency standards and the Finn Review's pathways, the Carmichael proposal was to develop a range of competency based pathways between school, employment and post-compulsory education.

Labour market trends have had a major impact upon young people's education and training needs. Despite the political push for partnerships between schools and

employers, the school teachers involved have often lacked the skills, knowledge and enthusiasm to ensure worthwhile workplace experience takes place, to the detriment of the students. (Sweet, 1994). A reflection of this difficulty in adopting a new teaching approach is the report that the post-compulsory education and training targets set by Finn ten years previous have not been realised. (Dusseldorp Skills Forum, 2002).

"Early leavers have significantly less chance of securing sustainable employment, and a problematic early start in the labour market can be difficult to overcome. This disadvantage serves to reinforce the impact of disadvantages experienced earlier in the school and social system." (Dusseldorp Skills Forum, 2002)

Researchers have identified a clear correlation between social class and success in the school system. Those students who were fortunate to be born into middle class families will in most cases out perform their lower class peers. (Batten & Russell, 1995). It is no surprise that middle class children usually have a clearer understanding of curriculum developed by middle class academics, have greater access to resources such as computers and texts, have a lifestyle conducive to learning about the world and politics and tend to have a family with high educational expectations.

Middle class children also have a clearer understanding of the required behaviours, language and expectations of teachers and schools. As Davies (1993) argues, children are obliged, due to the traditional classroom discourses to defer to their teachers' knowledge. However, the 'right' of teachers to be the leader can be undermined. When students do not co-operate in the 'usual' teacher-student relationship it becomes powerfully apparent how much students contribute to the stable classroom environment. (Davies 1983, 57). Students who seemingly refuse to comply with the dominant discourse tend to be quickly labelled by school personnel and have a greater risk of experiencing an alienating, unsuccessful school experience.

"School-based Discourses are quite anomalous in this respect. Schools don't merely separate learning from participation in 'mature' Discourses: they render the connection entirely mysterious." (Gee, Hull and Lankshear 1996, 15).

Kaplan (1990) saw a definite responsibility on the part of schools to assist in the development of each student's sense of worth and subsequent self-esteem. Teachers differ in the type and frequency of interaction they engage in with various students.

Most students know from an early age where they fit in the classroom setting. (Lafrance 1991, 4). Failure to experience positive feedback from school teachers, peers or parents, can result in an on-going sense of failure within the individual. Interaction with others is a primary method of ascertaining our individual worth. (Berk 1991, 11 – 13). An individual who receives negative responses is much more likely to have a lower self-regard and not feel confident in their attempts to learn.

The NSW Department of Education and Training (2004) have identified a much lower retention rate to Year 12 in the following three groups:

1. Low socio-economic backgrounds
2. Remote areas
3. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders

The majority of students from these three groups are unlikely to have the middle class savvy that appears to be necessary to experience success within the school system as discussed by Batton & Russell (1995) and Davies (1983).

The importance of suitable programs for at-risk students is often misunderstood or understated in the school community. Many teachers view these programs as short-term intervention strategies. There appears to be little awareness of the potential life long impact upon individuals and the larger community of a negative educational experience. The other disturbing issue is that often a 'blame the victim' mind set permeates the school community. Those students are viewed as incompetent, troublesome, come from dysfunctional backgrounds and aren't worthy of full participation.

Teaching reforms, which stress learner-centred approaches to education and training, are highly complementary to the demands of the labour market, particularly in relation to new capitalism or the knowledge economy. The present school system is not conducive to high levels of flexibility or innovative teaching methods. (Inquiry into the Provision of Public Education in NSW, 2002). Teachers reported to the inquiry that they felt constrained in their ability to teach creatively by mandatory testing and time pressures to 'get through' the curricula in the minimum amount of class time. They felt this reduced their potential to engage disinterested or slow learners and

increased classroom management issues with disruptive students. (Inquiry into the Provision of Public Education in NSW, 2002).

The emphasis on linkages with industry has many teachers floundering. They feel ill equipped to effectively deal with the workplace negotiating and competency based assessments. (Inquiry into the Provision of Public Education in NSW, 2002). If we accept Bernstein's (1978) theory that curriculum defines what counts as valid knowledge, how can teachers perform pedagogy (valid transmission of knowledge) if they are unfamiliar with the subject area they are required to teach? In a study of teachers of Year 12 students teachers were asked to provide details of their highest level of study in the subject areas they taught. In the area of Information Technology (18.6%) of Year 12 teachers reported they had little or no formal training in this subject. (The Fourth National Study of Teachers in Australian Schools 1999, 94). The study also found that 25.4% of the 9438 teachers surveyed held a diploma, certificate or less as their highest qualification. It was also found that 12.8% of the respondents gained their highest level qualification prior to 1974. (The Fourth National Study of Teachers in Australian Schools 1999, 91).

The fact that one quarter of teachers surveyed held a relatively low formal qualification combined with the 12.8% who had 30 years (plus) since they gained their qualification establishes a clear case for an increase in budgets for staff development activities for teachers.

"In order to properly discharge their professional obligations, teachers need to keep abreast of current developments in pedagogy and developments within their fields of specialisation. This is the view of not only teachers themselves but also of students and their parents….the annual amount available per teacher for professional development is approximately $25." (Inquiry into the Provision of Public education in NSW – May 2002).

The new capitalism or knowledge economy is the latest evolutionary stage of economic reform and labour market practices. Previous economies were tied to more tangible products such as crops and manufactured goods and they were structurally linked to communities or countries. Employment was long-term with many workers remaining employed by the same organisation all their working lives. Illiteracy was a social barrier but not necessarily a labour market one, due to the higher numbers of

available positions requiring manual labour. The workplace was usually hierarchical with top managers, middle managers then the workers. The workers were not expected to contribute other than by their manual labour, this being their currency or value. The middle managers were responsible for almost all the decisions and also for providing direction (orders) to the workers.

With new capitalism, knowledge is the currency and the market is global. Successful businesses continually update their products in response to client demand. Employment is less secure and valuable employees are those who can work both independently and within a team, are flexible and creative, have knowledge to contribute and are able to make decisions.

Along with the development of the new capitalism we have seen deeper alignments of business with educational institutions, enabling businesses to influence the educational delivery. Schools, Vocational Education and Training providers (VET) and universities remain at this stage, the major institutions for the acquisition of knowledge for future workers, however they no longer have the monopoly over determining what constitutes knowledge.

Businesses now demand more vocationally orientated training within schools, producing potential staff to meet their needs, "workers who can learn and adapt quickly, think for themselves, take responsibility, make decisions, and communicate what they need and know." (Gee, Hull, Lankshear 1996, 19).
"Over 94 per cent of Australia's secondary schools offering senior secondary programs now offer vocational education and training (VET) to their senior students. This means students can gain practical work skills and nationally-recognised VET qualifications as part of their school education. In 2001, over 169 000 school students undertook programs at school that could lead to Certificate I, II or III qualifications as well as a senior secondary certificate. Over 10 000 school students undertook part-time New Apprenticeships in 2001. Of these 5 755 were new commencements. This means that while studying their senior secondary certificate they were also trainees and employees, participating in a work based pathway. ANTA has provided $20 million a year over five years (1997-2001) to support the expansion of VET in schools, and this level of funding plus indexation will continue in the 2002-2004 period." (www.anta.gov.au 2002).

The demand for curriculum reform to reflect the needs of businesses and the interests of their communities, is an international, ongoing issue. As Piper (1997) skilfully highlights, large traditional structures are highly resistant to change and the education system is a prime example of this. In response to largely political pressures, change in the form of restructuring, has been implemented (and continues to be) with the ultimate outcome being the appearance of 'something being done'. The degree of actual educational improvement, despite the high levels of energy and funds invested in curriculum change is questionable. The restructures rarely impact upon classroom delivery nor do they necessarily serve the best interests of the students. (Piper, 1997).

The majority of people within communities and schools, when asked about the most important aspect of curriculum in successful schools respond with 'relevance' (Piper 1997, 89). What is considered relevant depends greatly upon the individuals' values, beliefs and also the 'traditional' or 'progressive' position preferred by the individual responding. Coupled with the issue of what is considered relevant within the school curriculum is the debate over academic rigour. Many people seem to be more concerned with the process as opposed to actual outcomes. It could also be argued that those who support the academic rigour stance do so as a form of intellectual snobbery and exclusiveness. The sociological perspective is particularly concerned with the concepts of power and social control that the curriculum can perpetuate. (Goodson, Anstead and Mangan, 1998).

"Relevance without rigour is professional collusion in the reproduction of disadvantage." (Piper 1997, 90).

Conclusions

From a positive perspective, at – risk students, potentially are the most likely to benefit from the new capitalism if there are substantial changes in school curriculum and delivery methods. Less classroom based delivery and more 'hands on' vocational training are among the successful strategies used to work with this target group. These strategies align well with the new business expectations for educational delivery. Personal attributes of many at-risk students i.e. resourcefulness, lack of tolerance for being ordered to do something, desire to have some input in decisions and dislike of high level structured environments. These match well with the needs of the new capitalist system.

The future vocational success of this target group rests heavily upon the ability of the school system to continue to introduce reforms that align with the new capitalism. Successful reforms introduced by motivated schools have been well documented. (Batton, M. and Russell, J. 1995; Coopers & Lybrand Consultants and Ashenden Milligan Pty Ltd. 1992; Ogden, E & Germinario, V. 1988.) Their strategies have included learner-centred approaches as well as a reduction of formalised classroom based programs. There is also evidence that the particular social discourse occupied by young people requires consideration in the development of suitable educational programs. (Gee, Hull and Lankshear 1996, 15).

Successful at-risk programs have demonstrated that the inclusion of the social discourse target groups' interests and general practices is pivotal to the success of the program. Examples of this include active learning methods to teach maths, literacy and teamwork eg having the students design and construct a skate ramp. Food technology can develop literacy, maths and vocational skills while actively measuring and preparing food. These approaches allow for real-life, concrete learning, building upon reasoning, problem solving and communication skills. The successful programs also enable at-risk students to experience success and perhaps more importantly an understanding of the value and relevance of learning.

In order to meet the needs of new capitalism at-risk students need to be taught how to learn. Real knowledge is transferable to different settings and situations. Knowledge is having an understanding of the particular area or issue and this knowledge can be shared in distributed systems. Students can become "expert novices" which enables them to think independently, engage in self-directed learning and apply their knowledge in a range of settings. (Gee, Hull and Lankshear 1996, 164). The present educational system fails to allow for problem – based learning which is a particular disadvantage to all students within the system.

The issue of appropriate curriculum and subsequent delivery, to meet the needs of contemporary students is indeed complex and challenging. Along with the clear need for provision of ongoing teacher training, there is also the debate regarding the value, or otherwise, of prescriptive content in curriculum documents. Should there be more comprehensive directives on the delivery methods as well as the teacher's qualifications, experience and skills? Is there value in upgrading the curriculum while not properly equipping the teachers to deliver what is required?

It is clear that the successful strategies used in at-risk programs align closely with the needs of both new capitalism and most students, be they high achievers in our current educational structure or those classified as at-risk. While not advocating for the Ivan Illich proposal of total abandonment of schools, it is obvious that the current school system is not working for many students. Our challenge as parents, educators and community members is to debate, plan and implement a more useful, contemporary approach to schools and education.

Bibliography

Australian Centre for Equity Through Education. 1996. School and Community Action for Full Service Schools – Making it Work. ACEE, Sydney.

Australian College of Education. 2001. Teachers in Australian Schools 1999. The Fourth National Study. Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs, Australia.

Bulmer, M. 1984. Sociological Research Methods. MacMillan, London.

Batton, M. and Russell, J. 1995. Students at Risk: A Review of Australian Literature 1980-1994. The Australian Council for Educational Research Ltd, Melbourne.

Berk, L. E. 1991. Child Development. Second Edition. Allyn and Bacon, USA.

Bernstein, B. 1978. On the Classification and Framing of Educational Knowledge. In Young, M. (ed). Knowledge and Control: New Directions for the Sociology of Education. Collier Macmillan Ltd., London, 47 – 69.

Coopers & Lybrand Consultants and Ashenden Milligan Pty Ltd. 1992. An Evaluation of the Commonwealth's Students at Risk Program, 1990 and 1991. Department of Employment, Education and Training.

Dusseldorp Skills Forum. 1994. Forging New Connections to the Workplace. Sydney.

Dusseldorp Skills Forum. 1995. All of Their Talents? Sydney.

Dusseldorp Skills Forum. 2002. How Young People are Faring. Ultimo, Sydney.

Gee, J. P. and Hull, G. and Lankshear, C. 1996 The New Work Order – Behind the Language of the New Capitalism. Allen & Unwin, Sydney.

Goodson, I. 1989. The Making of Curriculum, The Falmer Press, London.

Goodson, I., Anstead, C. and Mangan, J. M. 1998. Becoming a School Subject. Goodson, I. (ed.) Subject Knowledge: Readings for the Study of School Subjects. Falmer Press, London, 20 – 37.

Inquiry into the Provision of Public Education in NSW – First Report May 2002.

Kaplan, P.S. 1990. Educational Psychology for Tomorrows Teacher. West, St. Paul.

Lafrance, M. 1991. School for Scandal: Different Educational Experiences for Females and Males. Gender and Education, 3 (1) 3 –13.

NSW Department of Education and Training. 2004. Excellence and Innovation – A Consultation with the Community of NSW on Public Education and Training. Sydney.

Ogden, E & Germinario, V. 1988. The At-Risk Student: answers for educators. Lancaster, Technomic.

Piper, K. 1997. Disciplines and Bondage: The search for a Practical Framework. In Piper, K. (ed.) Riders in the Chariot: Curriculum Reform and the National Interest 1965 1995. The Australian Council for Educational Research Ltd., Melbourne Victoria.

Schneiders, M. 1994. Until One Day I'd had Enough Then I Ran Away. Dept. of Employment, Education and Training, Australia.

Tait, G. 1995. Shaping the At-Risk Youth: Risk, Governmentality and the Finn Report. Discourse: Studies in the cultural politics of education, Vol. 16, No. 1.

Withers, G and Batten, M. 1995. Programs for At-Risk Youth: A Review of American, Canadian and British Literature since 1984. Australian Council for Educational Research Ltd, Melbourne

Warren, E. (1954). Brown versus Board of Education of Topeka. In R. Hofstadter and B. K. Hofstadter (Eds.), Great Issues in American History: From reconstruction to the present day, 1864-1981, (pages 444-445). Vintage Books: New York.

Birgitte Norlyk

Rethinking Competences: Nordic Graduates in a Global Market

Abstract

Referring to an ongoing EEC study of language graduates and their employment situation, this paper represents the main findings and conclusions of the Danish national report on the employability of Danish language graduates in 2004. Roughly 25% of recent language graduates are unemployed and need to find employment outside of the public sector, especially in small and medium sized companies that constitute the main area of growth within Danish economy.

For language graduates and universities this has resulted in a redefinition of linguistic competences and traditional curricula. Ongoing dialogues between universities, employers and language graduates have pointed to the need of teaching foreign language skills in a context of business related competences esp. within intercultural communication and IT.

The Labour market

The Danish labour market is characterized by a very large amount of small and medium-sized companies. In contrast to the Euro-Stat definition of small and medium-sized companies (max. 249 full-time employees), Danish Statistics operate with a maximum of 99 full-time employees. Approximately 98 % of Danish companies belong to this category, which employs roughly 38% of the total work force. Furthermore, recent surveys indicate that small and medium-sized companies generate approx. 35% of the total national export with companies of 1- 49 employees showing the fastest growth rate in the private sector.

From an employment point of view, studies and surveys of the employability of the academic work force in general have pointed to small and medium-sized companies as the most important group of *potential* employers for academics, despite the fact that Danish small and medium-sized companies are reluctant to employ university graduates. Traditionally, most academics have been employed by major national or international companies or by the public sector.

Surveys and Statistics

The statistics referred to in this study are not directly comparable, since they are structured according to different principles and categories. Thus statistics on university language graduates are structured according to language, e.g. Anglo-Germanic, Romance, Slavonic etc, while the statistics on language graduates from business schools are structured according to types of job profile.
Likewise, the some of the surveys referred in this paper target different groups of graduates e.g. all graduates from the Humanities or smaller groups e.g. language graduates with a degree in German.

Overview of the Present Situation

Language training at the level of higher education takes place at either universities or business schools with English as the dominant foreign modern language followed by German and Romance languages (mainly French and Spanish) and Slavonic languages. While universities till the early 1990s almost exclusively targeted their students to take up professions within the government and public sector, primarily upper-secondary-school teaching, language graduates from business schools were targeted towards language-related professions within the private sector. University curricula traditionally concentrated on language, literature and socio-cultural factors, while business school curricula focused on translation, interpretation and terminology in a business context.

Due to changes in the political environment and the high level of unemployment especially among new graduates, a new and much debated university act was implemented in 2003 to further the interaction between higher education institutions and the national labour market. The University Act of 2003 emphasises the need for a much closer co-operation between research, curricula development and the labour market, introducing external boards of directors into the management of universities. Following the 3+2 structure of the Bologna declaration, the new University Act stresses the need for a higher degree of flexibility and modular structures in curricula as well as the need for an increased focus on career and job profiles in teaching and research.

Private and Public Sector Employment

Over the past few years, the traditional job profiles of the two types of language graduates (universities and business schools) have undergone a substantial change to adapt to changes in the labour market. Due to the high level of unemployment for Danish academics, young university graduates no longer se themselves as targeted solely for language training and teaching jobs within the public sector and business school language graduates supplement their language expertise with extra-linguistic competences in e.g. communication, intercultural studies, computer science, European studies etc. to adapt to the changing demands of the labour market.

Private sector employment

About one fourth of language graduates from universities are employed in the private sector, especially in the service industries. Some language graduates are employed as editors, technical writers, documentation specialists or localization experts, while others find employment as e.g. Human Resource officers or communication managers.

Contrary to university graduates, business school language graduates have always been targeted towards the private sector, which is, to a certain degree, as yet more comfortable with business school graduates. Business school graduates have

traditionally been responsible for business correspondence, translation, interpretation, some secretarial functions as well as independent case work at various levels. Business school graduates are also employed as e.g. technical writers and documentation specialists and localization experts.

Public sector employment

As mentioned above, language graduates from universities are traditionally employed within the framework of the public sector, especially teaching at upper-secondary level or at graduate level.. Thus an overwhelming majority of language graduates from universities are still employed at various levels of the teaching professions or in various kinds of public service.

For university graduates especially, language teaching represents a very important part of the "pure-play" language-related professions (i.e. professions in which language is considered the core competence). The teaching of foreign languages may take place both in the public sector and in the private sector.

As concerns "pure-play" language functions, surveys indicate that business school graduates are preferred in the private sector due to their knowledge of business correspondence, business genres and special terminology. Typical "pure-play" language-related jobs are e.g. teacher in secondary education or higher education, translator, interpreter, terminologist specialized in legal, technical or economic terminology (business school graduates only).

Ancillary language-related professions (i.e. professions which require linguistic competences in combination with other competences) are typically found in the private sector, e.g. in publishing, media, banks, service and production companies, international engineering companies, information technology providers etc. Further, surveys indicate that small and medium-sized companies often prefer a combination of qualifications, e.g. one or two foreign languages and communication, foreign languages and IT competences etc.

Examples of typical ancillary language-related job profiles are: Editor, consultant, language coordinator, export assistant, marketing assistant, sales assistant, Human Resource officer, website manager, localization expert, personal assistant to C.E.O.s, independent case worker, language quality manager, documentation specialist, information officer media officer, data manager etc.

Effects of European Integration and Globalisation

For businesses and organizations, globalisation and integration have resulted in an increased level of activity in international markets. As far as trade and industry are concerned, this development traditionally favours language graduates from business schools.

Further, globalisation has resulted in businesses and organizations requiring a range of new, supplementary competences within e.g. intercultural communication, intercultural teamwork, negotiation skills, the use of especially English as a lingua franca, communication skills, skills in information technology, etc.

The growing tendency of many Danish companies to outsource their production, especially to countries in Eastern Europe or to Asian countries may eventually lead to a demand for new language profiles, although English is considered a global lingua franca by many employers in the business world. Thus, the foreign language most widely taught and used in a Danish context is English, with German, Spanish or French as a second foreign language in secondary education. Slavonic languages, Italian, Chinese and Japanese and a number of other languages are taught at university level to a limited number of students.

Present and Future Needs

Regional, language-specific surveys undertaken by Danish universities identify a range of needs for curriculum innovation. Although needs may vary from one language to another, the following needs represent a high frequency on the needs list for both

language graduates and employers in the private sector. While it is important to notice that some of the needs identified are already in the process of being implemented at most higher education institutions in Denmark, it is equally important to notice that few language courses contain the total number of needs identified. Also, the needs identified may depend on the individual combination of courses chosen by the individual student.

Present Needs identified by both language graduates and employers

* foreign language proficiency, oral and written, special terminology

* intercultural competences, ability to improve intercultural communication in a business context, e.g. negotiation skills

* writing and communication skills, e.g. writing and editing texts for different media in the national and a foreign language

* professional and practical competences, e.g. ability to share knowledge, ability to translate theory into practice

* competences in general information technology as well as competences within special areas, e.g. technology-assisted translation

* general IT competences, finding valid information on the Internet

Future needs identified by employers only:

It is important to bear in mind that some of the studies and surveys referred to in this study focus on the general employability of academics or graduates from the humanities (of which language graduates are only a part), while other surveys referred to focus specifically on language graduates. Consequently, some of the comments

made by employers e.g. that academics demonstrate a limited understanding of the business world and have problems with teamwork etc., reflect on the entire group of academics. The list of future needs presented in this context contains information from both general surveys on academics as well as information from surveys relating to language graduates only.

Employers identified the following as important future skills in academic employees.

- Increased skills in IT: structuring of databases, focused information seeking, IT presentation skills, and lay-out skills

- Journalistic competences, e.g. writing for different audiences, text editing in national and foreign languages, increased knowledge about genres, e.g. in connection with press releases and specific business genres

- Organisational competences, e.g. understanding the structure of an organisation, understanding a business context, understanding business values and conditions, e.g. the importance of deadlines, operational here and now solutions and the need for efficiency. This point is made by employers in all types of surveys on university graduates

- Communicative and social competences, e.g. teamwork, project work, ability to work under stress, ability to share knowledge, ability to work with non-academics

- Increased degree of intercultural competences: working in international teams, international communication

- Pedagogical competences, e.g. knowledge sharing, working constructively in a non-academic context

- Personal competences

In most of the surveys referred to, employers mention *personal competences* as an extremely important factor when employing university graduates. Flexibility, openness, readiness
to adapt to organisational values and organisational culture, stress handling, networking etc. are listed as important personal qualifications in this context. To a certain degree, professional competences can be taught by the employer. Personal competences, on the other hand, are a different matter according to employers. Here, a 100% match is required. According to employers, the ideal employee is characterized by enthusiasm, flexibility and openness. He/she is a team player with lots of team spirit in combination with a systematic, structured personality that focuses on results and adapts to the process of life-long learning.

Methods

Higher education institutions may to a certain extent seek to incorporate some of these needs and requirements into the structuring of study programmes e.g. by stressing such pedagogical practices as project work and group presentations.
A variety of skills, e.g. concerning information technology and general presentation skills, are increasingly incorporated in the pedagogical process as standard requirements, e.g. presentations via Power Point or other programs.
Furthermore, higher education organisations seek to incorporate realistic work-practise situations or work-related periods of study into their study programmes to facilitate the integration of theory and practice required by employers.
Personal, social, and communicative competences are strengthened by the increased focus on project work, study groups, workshops, group exams, while the ability to work under stress and within a limited time frame is tested e.g. by means of so-called 24-hours take-home exams in which the student is presented with a case or a problem to which he or she has to present a solution within 24 hours.

Constraints

A certain number of constraints present themselves as concerns the implementation of the needs identified by graduates, employers and institutions of higher education. Thus the cultural differences between the parties involved might represent a challenge not to be underestimated or overlooked.

While companies of a certain size have traditionally employed academics for specific functions, primarily business school graduates in economics or in foreign languages, national studies and surveys on university academics and their employability point to small and medium-sized companies as a new job market for academics in general.

In a Danish context, this requires studies of how to facilitate the integration of an academic culture into the culture of small and medium-sized companies that have no traditions for employing academics. A national survey published in 2004 points out that 2 out of 3 major companies (100+) find it relevant to employ academics, as opposed to only 1 in every 10 for small and medium-sized companies.

Danish studies of small and medium-sized companies point to a dominant hands-on, here-and-now culture alien to academic theorizing, strategic planning and language policies. Surveys indicate, however, that the first academic employed in small and medium-sized companies becomes an important role model who may – or may not - help facilitate the future employment for other groups of academics into this type of company. The communicative skills and the personal and social competences of the individual academic are considered to play an important part in this process.

References

AMS – Analyse af akademikeres arbejdsmarked, oktober 2003. PLS Rambøll for bl.a. Arbejdsmarkedsstyrelsen, Akademikernes Centralorganisation og Ministeriet for Videnskab, Teknologi og Udvikling.

Den moderne humanist, en erhvervsundersøgelse af humanistiske kandidater fra Aarhus Universitet 1995 – 2001, Det Humanistiske Fakultet ved Aarhus Universitet, 2002.

Dimittendprojekt 2002: Kandidatundersøgelse og aftagerundersøgelse, Roskilde Universitet og Aalborg Universitet, 2002.

De universitetsuddannedes arbejdsmarked: Materiale om de universitetsuddannedes arbejdsmarked. Udarbejdet af Ministeriet for Videnskab, Teknologi og Udvikling, marts 2003.

Evaluering af de universitære tyskuddannelser, Danmarks Evalueringsinstitut, 2003.

Humanister i erhvervslivet. En undersøgelse om humanisters kompetencer – set med erhvervslivets øjne. NFO Genius for Syddansk Universitet, Det Humanistiske Fakultet, Dansk Handel og Service, Folketinget, Aarhus Universitet, Det Humanistiske Fakultet. Februar 2004.

Humanister på vej til det private arbejdsmarked, Nyhedsbrev fra Dansk Industri, 2002.

Hvem bruger de gode hoveder? – Akademikere i serviceerhvervene, rapport fra Dansk Handel og Service, 2003.

Magistrenes arbejdsmarked: En statistisk beskrivelse af magistrenes uddannelsesbaggrund, beskæftigelse, køn, alder m.v. Dansk Magisterforening, juni 2003 på basis af oplysninger fra Danmarks Statistik.

Statistics and job profiles on language graduates from Business Schools supplied by courtesy of their Union ' Communication and Language' for the benefit of this project, March 2004.

Yelena Nymm

The Dialogue of Russians and Estonians Through Jokes: Forming Up of Ethnic Stereotypes

Russian and Estonian people have a wide tradition of intercultural communication that traces back from time immemorial. (The first mentioning of Estonians are to be found in Russian chronicles of the 11–12th century). The mutual interest of those two neighbouring nations was demonstrated in different periods of time differently. Surely, the history of the second half of the 20th century gives us a perfect example of a new splash of their interest. Political, social, economical, and historical contexts influence greatly the nature of interpretation of both Russians and Estonians of their cultural and national identity.

In our article we will look at the process of the formation of the ethnic concepts of those two nations about each other on the example of jokes. Nowadays a joke is a bright and sufficiently active genre of the contemporary city folklore. What is more, jokes reflect the ethnic stereotypes existing in this or that cultural environment in a most direct way. Jokes about foreigners or ethnical minorities express an informal point of view on the cultural and national originality of a neighbouring nation.

It is hard to say the exact time when the jokes and humorous tales about the neighboring nations appeared in Russian and Estonian folklore. As scholars claimed, the contemporary Russian jokes about Finns and Estonians went back to the existing in the Russian Empire tales about the Old Finnish (*Shmeleva, Shmelev 2002*: 50). Undoubtedly the tradition of telling anecdotes about each other was being actively formed throughout the 20th century both in the Soviet era and the post-Soviet Russia. Curiously, in the Soviet period the boundaries between Estonian and Russian jokes used to be more movable than they are nowadays.

On the one hand, Estonian jokes about Russians of the second half of the 20th century share the traditional for many other cultures concepts about the Russian national

character — the passion of the Russians to vodka that wins over all the rest passions (drunkenness as a national Russian trait is being played up in Russian jokes as well). Compared with the representatives of other nations the Russians in Estonian jokes are traditionally poor. At the same time their poverty is compensated by cunningness. This set of traits of a Russian character is typical of many Russian multinational jokes as well. Evidently, it has the more deep folklore background (one can remember a character of a fairy-tale).

On the other hand, Estonian jokes express the absolutely local peculiarity of the interpretation of Russian people connected with the historical and political events of the 20th century. Firstly, Estonian jokes make fun Russian's ignorance of foreign languages and related with it a low level of the communicative culture. Secondly, there is an idea of a dominant number of Russians as opposed to a comparatively smaller number of Estonians. As an example we can give one of the multinational Estonian anecdotes the characters of which are an American (in the other variants a Frenchman), Russian and Estonian:

There are an American, Russian and Estonian sitting on the train. An American rummages in his backpack, takes a packet of juice "Jaffa" and throws it out of the window. All the rest are astonished, but the Yankee says: "We have loads of such trash".

After that a Russian rummages in his backpack, takes a bottle of vodka and throws it out of the window.

We have hot loads of such stuff.

An Estonian rummages in his backpack but finds nothing. Then he takes a Russian and throws him out of the window.

— We have got more than enough of that shit.

This joke reflects the situation of opposition of the two nations in the conditions of life in the Soviet state, the struggle of Estonians for the national independence and consequently self-consciousness as an ethnic minority.

A political and national separatism of Estonians is shown in modern Russian jokes (as an example a short joke: "Estonians — a small, but dignified mountain nation are to be blamed for everything"). The Caucasian associations present here are somewhat odd

judging by the geographical position of Estonia, but are supported at the same time by the similarities in the Northern-Caucasian region of Russia.

Russians in Estonian jokes often show the tendency for the territory imperialism. Thus, a Russian schoolgirl wonders why Estonians don't cross the Ural mountains where they are originally from; in another joke the situation is deliberately turned over — the Estonian nation is ironically named the greediest one as it "seized the whole Russia and now is at a loss how to feed it").

Estonians defending themselves from the expansion of the Russian people stick to the double tactic. On the one hand, they try to find such a place in the Earth where there are no Russians realizing all the Utopianism of this idea. On the other hand, such a defence often acquires a rather aggressive nature. In the Estonian jokes Estonians can behave rather rudely towards Russians throwing them out of the train, slapping them in the face. Typically performing such actions they are driven by the merely nationalistic ideas and justify their right for such an aggression. Apparently the answer should be found in the certain historical and political nature of relationship between the two nations at the second part of the 20th century.

A certain peak of popularity of the jokes about Estonians falls in the 1990s — the time when Estonia gained its national sovereignty. Some details allow us to think that those jokes appeared and functioned mainly at the borderline territories of Russia and Estonia. Only the direct cultural and linguistic contacts can explain the appearance of Estonian words in Russian jokes as "pole viga" (it doesn't matter, nothing to worry about), "raisk" (an interjection expressing an extreme discontent), "hapukoor (sour cream) etc.

The topic of those jokes is provided by the life itself, its political and social events. The nineties in Estonia is the time of deepening of the national problem and worsening of international relations. Jokes demonstrate the opposition of Russians and Estonians based on the national and linguistic background. Extensive usage of the linguistic notions is connected first and foremost with the linguistic policy of the Estonian people. Estonians making others speak their language are shown in the jokes as the staunch followers of the idea of protection of their native language. The ideological beliefs mean more to them than a financial profit. (Remember a joke where an

Estonian is demanding that a golden fish speaks Estonian with him). Surely one can feel a hint at the short-sightedness of Estonians. Russians in counterbalance to the Estonian linguistic inflexibility resort themselves to the linguistic terrorism.

Estonia. A customer (Russian) enters a shop. There is a saleswoman (Estonian) behind the counter. The customer tries to explain in poor Estonian what he wants.

The saleswoman in broken Russian:

-Please, would you most likely speak Russian, I understand everything.

-We have listened to your Russian for fifty years, now it's your turn to listen to our Estonian.

This joke reflects a certain warming-up in the Russian-Estonian everyday contacts: one can recall numerous stories of offended Russians to whom Estonian saleswomen knowing Russian refuse in principle to speak Russian.

The problem of the language corruption that the Russians are doing towards Estonian and Estonians — towards Russian is shown in jokes rather dramatically. Jokes about Estonians reproduce a typical Estonian accent (lengthening of consonants and stressed vowels, making voiced phonemes voiceless). Russian-speaking Estonians can't pronounce the words in a correct way, thus there are a lot of puns based on this peculiarity. Many jokes about Estonians circulate around the phenomenon of homophony. For instance, one can give an example of the touching attempts of a perplexed Estonian to understand the subtleties of the Russian language.

An Estonian is sitting in the toilet and meditates:

— Wh-what an odd thing it is — this Russian! Church is "cathedral" –right? "wall" is "fence", my usual stomach problem is "constipation"-but in Russian — you can imagine — it is one and the same word — 'zapor"!!!

Such a joke is a perfect example of the untranslatability, as the whole comic situation which is the essence of it lies in the phonetic play. An Estonian due to his feature to make voiced phonemes voiceless pronounces all the words alike, where as in the Russian language they have a different lexical meaning and a phonetic form. (Cathedral — /sobor/ — is any of various important churches (*Random House 2001*: 328); "fence" — /zabor/ — a barrier enclosing or bordering a field, yard etc used to prevent entrance (*Random House 2001*: 708); "constipation" — /zapor/ — a condition

of the bowels in which the faeces are dry and hardened and evacuation is difficult and infrequent (*Random House 2001*: 436)).

The central part in the formed image of an Estonian plays the slowliness. One of the reasons of forming of such an ethnic stereotype is found in the above-mentioned features of pronunciation by Estonians of Russian words — an excessive drawling of sounds, syllables, words. The scholars have already pointed out the traces of the linguistic interference in the Russian speech of Estonians, as well as the influence of the phonetic system of the Estonian language (the presence of the length of vowels and consonants (*Leibov 2001*). E. Shmeleva and A. Shmelev on the other material showed that the peculiarities of the Russian speech by non-Russians have become in Russian jokes the basis of formation of the national stereotype (*Shmeleva, Shmelev 2002*: 63).

A slow nature of Estonians is demonstrated on the intellectual and emotional level, incorporates all the physiological processes. Seemingly, this ethnic stereotype appears to be one of the oldest in the Russian culture and was known well before the appearance of the jokes about Estonians. "Letters of a Russian traveller" (1791–1795) by N. Karamsin where Estonians are shown as sluggish, awkward and "sleepy" people can testify to that.

This national trait of Estonians is described by the word "brake" (a slang word for a slowly-thinking person, a blockhead). This word can be met in different variants in the jokes. See one of them: "The symbol of Tallinn is "The Old Brake". The mentioned symbol is a tower in the historical center of Tallinn — "Vana Toomas" ("The Old Toomas") which is really considered to be the symbol of the city. In another joke the image of the brake is rethought in the context of the general theme of the jokes. "The answer of the President of Estonia to the authors and fans of the jokes about Estonians — "It's not we who are using the brakes, it's you who are driving hard".

A slow nature of Estonians is spread on everything that takes place in the Estonian world or has an Estonian background. All the natural and physical phenomena are a subject of a slow rhythm.

Estonian Airlines. We fly quicker than a locomotive.

The cruellest mafia in the world is Estonian. A person dies his own death but in a constant waiting.

A brick was slowly falling from the roof hardly making its way in a dense Tallinn air…

A new dog-breed was raised in Estonia — an Estonian hound. Meant for hunting for the wounded snails and turtles.

Estonian cooks designed a new type of coffee — slow to dissolve.

Estonians have got the cheapest Internet in the world, as they have the lo-o-ongest minute!

The secret of the slow-shooting bullets "Matrix" has been revealed — the instructor of the film was an Estonian sniper.

The coordinates of the Estonian world in jokes have become the extension of time and space. It seems that the time loses its dimension as it is so easy to lose not only the feeling of time, but also the perception of space.

An Estonian is standing near the railway track, meets another Estonian driving a cart. One of them asks:

— Is it far to get to Tallinn?

— No, not very far.

He gets on the cart. An hour, two hours pass. The first one asks:

— And now is it far to get to Tallinn?

— Now it is really far!

It is easy to get lost in the Estonian space:

The Bermuda triangle is the Estonian Embassy in the Atlantic Ocean.

Elvis didn't die. He simply moved to Tallinn.

It seems that such a vagueness of the system of coordinates of the Estonian world is not only the result of "slowliness" of all the physical processes. The psychological reasons of the appearance of such an ethnical stereotype may be well connected with the subconscious fear of Russians of the Estonian space, uncertainty they feel in the world of Estonians.

Slowliness and stupidity are not the only characteristics of Estonians in Russian jokes — stability, thrift and accuracy add to that picture.

A dead crow is lying on the village road. An old cart stopped nearby. An Estonian came out of it and put the crow on the cart.

— It might come in handy one day.

Ten years passed by. On the same road, now clean and asphalted, at the same place stops a 600 Mercedes. The same Estonian comes out of, takes a crow's skeleton and puts it back on the road.

— Haven't come in handy.

An Estonian is given typical traits of a notorious "new Russian' — a 600 Mercedes. This coincidence is not accidental. The common features of an Estonian and new Russian have become stupidity and success in life with the difference that a well-being of "new Russians" is the matter of luck or a result of criminal past while a material well-being of an Estonian is based on his thrift and hard work.

In Russian jokes an Estonian is a collective noun of all the Baltic nations including Finnish. One can often read the jokes about Finnish while they are supposed to be Estonians. The ethnic features of Estonians in the jokes about Finnish are more distinct.

If an Estonian passes you by in Latvia, then you are Finnish.

The mixture of the ideas about the different Baltic ethnic groups is shown in the use of anthroponymes — along with the Estonian names there are Latvian and Lithuanian — *Valdis*, *Petras*, a Finnish name *Toivanen*.

The jokes about Estonians practically eliminated the necessity of appearance of the other Baltic nationalities in the Russian urban folklore. Thus, one can't find any jokes about Lithuanians, jokes about Finnish are basically functioned under the Estonian names. That fact testifies to an active position and great energy of Estonians as compared with the other Baltic nations. This idea seems a bit controversial taking into account an ethnic stereotype of an Estonian as a slow, awkward blockhead.

On the one hand, Russian jokes about Estonians are a variant of the traditional for many cultures jokes about "stupid neighbours". This desire to show a neighbour in a funnier and more stupid way that he is in reality can well reflect a hidden fear and envy of him, admiration of his success (a slow Estonian ten years later drives a 600 Mercedes on the asphalted road!) On the other hand, the jokes testify that Estonians in spite of being an independent state continue to be treated not as foreigners, but as representatives of a minority group (see *Shmeleva, Shmelev 2002*: 79). Russians are

trying to apply the usual scheme of reception of Estonia and Estonians as a part of a big multinational state to the contemporary situation. Perhaps it is a try to remove the intercultural tension.

The shared view on the intercultural communication in Russian and Estonian jokes is different. In Russian jokes which is more focused on the reflection of the linguistic ways of communication, the dialogue between the nations is hindered but possible. On the contrary, in Estonian jokes there is a tendency to avoid any dialogue, shut oneself up in the boundaries of his cultural environment. In Estonian jokes Russians don't speak Estonian — we wouldn't find any examples of the Estonian speech pronounced by Russians. On the other hand, Estonian jokes transfer the ethnic conflict based on the mutual non-coincidence of the dreams and interests of both nations. Jokes reflecting the national fears, complexes, hopes provide an interesting material for the research to find the reasons behind the failure of the intercultural communication, as well as the ways to construct productive models for communication.

References

Leibov 2001 — Лейбов Р. Г. «Прибалт»: Слово и представление // Acta Baltica 2001. Kaunas, 2001. С. 48–54.

Random House 2001 — Random House Unabridged Dictionary. Random House, New York, 2001.

Shmeleva, Shmelev 2002 — Шмелева Е. Я., Шмелев А. Д. Русский анекдот: текст и речевой жанр. М., 2002

Peter Nynäs

Global Vagabonds and the multicultural challenge - place and the self in global mobility

Abstract

In this article I point to a psychological co-constitutive of the multicultural challenge in general which is relevant for reflections on intercultural competence. A deeper understanding of problems in international project-cooperation is explored in terms of an underlying transformation of world-view especially related to continuous work-related mobility. The transformation of world-view, reflected in patterns of action and thinking, is explored as an existential dimension of mobility evolving from the evasive relationship between place and the human self. I thus highlight the relevance of human geography and object relations theory for the understanding of multicultural competence.

Keywords: project, mobility, place, self, intercultural competence

Projects and mobility

International industrial project-cooperation, reflected in this article, can be seen as a micro phenomenon with great resemblance to the process of globalisation. Globalisation is qualitatively more than a matter of the extension of economic activities across national boundaries. It is a functional integration of internationally dispersed activities (Dicken 1998:5). It is a widespread process of political and cultural nature and a process mediated by the actions of both individuals and institutions (Rankin 2003:710). As a reflection of this, industrial projects e.g. power-plant buildings are often a complex and temporary international network consisting of different suppliers and sub-suppliers, financiers, authorities, deliverers, end-user, owners and so on. The different roles of all these are integrated in the project according to the functionality of the project. The result of this is an increase of global functional networks, with strong international and multicultural ingredients.

Mobility, both human and material, is a key feature of projects as of globalisation. It is well acknowledged that mobility has increased enormously the last decades partly due to global economics. Mobility is one of the primary mechanism of globalisation. (Bach

2003: 230) Thus, Urry (2000) has emphasised the relevance of mobility and argues for ”a sociology of mobility”. In this article, though, I do not highlight the affects of mobility within the process of globalisation from a sociological perspective. Instead I ask: How are people on a psychological level affected by continuously moving from one culture to another and does this mobility affect their worldview? The specific aim is to point to an existential dimension of work-related human mobility in international projects.

Mobility related to international projects can be categorized into two interrelated types of mobility. On the one hand we see an increasing amount of travelling to specific locations as a way to establish and maintain the functionality of the network and the project. People from different places meet to negotiate, to do work together and so on. On the other hand, as a result of the project- and network-character, we can acknowledge a pattern of continuous global mobility. This kind of long-distance international work-mobility is especially typical to the ‘knowledge-industry’, i.e. organisations in the global knowledge and network-based economy (Castells 1996:77). Thus, job descriptions of e.g. industrial project managers imply continuous travelling on an international level. Travelling is more or less an everyday routine of people working in international projects. Considering ‘time-space intensification’ a characteristic of global workplaces (Riain 2000: 179), I will argue that this process is of a general significance to both the self-understanding and the life-attitude of the persons involved. Thus it also affects cooperation and interaction central to the functionality of projects.

To highlight the affects of mobility related to international project-cooperation I explore in this article some common experiences from industrial projects as they are articulated in diaries written by practitioners.[6] The diaries reflect the practitioners’ first experience of working abroad in projects, i.e. the culture chock they experience in relation to the local culture but also in relation to the sub-culture of the project-team. Thus, the diaries also reflect the way of working and the life-style structured around international projects. As one of the practitioners stated: *“Once again it became evident to me that once you have started to travel around in the world it gets very hard to quit. You are not comfortable anymore in your home country. Back there, something is felt to be wrong.”*

It is not surprising that in the diaries these people are explicitly recognised as “vagabonds”. It is more than a way of working we are confronted with. It is more of a life-style constituted by the mobility and the functionality typical to international

projects. In projects we encounter the kind of mobility Bauman (1999: 89) refers to when in his reflection on the human consequences of globalisation distinguishes between the inhabitants of the first and the second world. The first, he writes, travel at will and get much fun from their travel and the second often illegally and if not lucky get arrested or deported. But, the first group of people is not as glamorous as the brief definition let us believe. In contrast to tourists moved from place to place by the attraction they experience, this group of vagabonds are forced to move on by the felt inhospitable or hostile surrounding (Bauman 1999: 93). Thus, the characteristics also distinguish this group from expatriates, a non-citizen who settles down in a place to stay for an undetermined length of time (Jandt 1995: 278).

Place as experience and existence

The dimension of increasing global mobility is to a large extent constituted by the changing experience of place, and, as argued by many, by the compression or intensification of time and place. Still, turning to the concept of place this needs to be reflected upon as a highly complex process. Mobility is not moving from one geographical location to another only. Places are known not only through the eyes and mind but also through the more direct modes of experience, which resist objectification. They are locations of experience shaped by memories, expectations and by stories of real and imagined events. Further, places as rooted in strong visceral feelings. In short: places are of significance to people and infused with feelings and meanings, which include perceiving, doing, thinking, and feeling in a certain way. (Tuan 1975:151; Walter 1980-81:141, 162)

An existential dimension of place can be further developed with the concept "existential space". In his study on the architectural images of film the Finnish architect Pallasmaa (2001) has developed the concept existential spaces to catch a deep lying significance of spaces and places we enter. Referring e.g. to the director Tarkovsky (1986: 150), Pallasmaa (2001: 9) exemplifies existential dimension of space with the poetic dimension of films and images. Poetic images are condensations of numerous experiences and invigorate our imagination opening up streams of association and affect. They sensitise our existential selves and the boundary between the world and our selves as e.g. images "impregnated in our minds through the forgotten and frightened child who inhabitants the adult body of each and everyone of us." (Pallasmaa 2001: 114).

Pallasmaa highlights an existential dimension of place as a connection to the inner psychological space of man, and suggests an important interplay between place and

[6] The material referred to is collected by *Research Institute for Project Based Industry*, Åbo, Finland.

the self. This way of understanding the significance of certain places and spaces bears resemblance to Holm's (1995) integrated role theory of symbols. Holm underlines that objectified symbols have a personal equivalent in the inner existential space consisting of affective structures and motifs. In the condensed form they become symbols and inhabit an important role in the inner existence space as means in a struggle for life-space touching on both constructive and destructive forces in the interface between the self and the world (Holm 1995: 134ff). Place, as a symbol, is situated in the intermediate area between the individual and the environment and it is determined partly by (early) life experiences (Winnicott 1971: 100, 103). It is not enough to ask what we are doing when we for example participate in a concert or an project-meeting abroad: "The question also needs to be posed: where are we (if anywhere at all)?" (Winnicott 1971: 105)

A similar perspective of place has also been applied in human geography research, as psychoanalytical theories have been used by e.g. Sibley (1995) and Pile (1996; 2005). As places are considered to be evocative of inner affective structures related to the self we touch on something that is theoretically highly relevant. Assuming the presence of the 'unconscious' it becomes obvious that the experience of place is not easily dissolvable into interpretative fluidity. It is also trapped in repetition, deeply antagonistic to change (Callard 2003). This points to some significant limits of both interpretative processes and the rationale dimension of cognitive processes.

The existential dimension of place concerns the evocative influence places might have on people. An extreme example of this is the Jerusalem syndrome. People visiting Jerusalem might experience strong emotions that force them to adopt religious models and act in an unexpected way, and maybe perceive themselves as prophets. Some might enter a psychosis, but an individual history of psychopathology does not explain the character of the syndrome, as such a history cannot always be traced. (Leppäkari 2005) The city of Jerusalem becomes a symbol, an existential place, evocative of affective structures and manifesting itself in a transformation of patterns of action, thinking and relating. A similar phenomenon is "la sindrome de Stendhal". People visiting Florence were hospitalised in psychiatric clinics due to the intense and overwhelming aesthetic experience of the city (Magherini and Zanobini 1987). This syndrome sheds light on how an aesthetic experience can recall a strong inner sense of longing and lack (Kjellqvist 2004: 127).

A way to understand the transformations of common patterns of thinking, acting, relating and feeling we face in international mobility, is to acknowledge the existential dimension of place, i.e. the intimate evocative relationship between place and human

self. Both the other culture in itself and ‘the compressed place’ might be evocative in a way that bears resemblance to existential spaces constituting a challenge to the selves of people. In the following I will explore these aspects of mobility by examining in more detail the interplay between place and self. Methodologically, grasping an existential dimension of place and mobility, this calls for a combination of an interpretative approach with both a phenomenological approach and a psychological approach. We need to observe that experiences reflected in the material on the one hand are socially constructed. On the other hand, they are also rooted in a more preverbal way of being in the world and seem to have an intimate relationship to the self.

A real journey into fantasy

As, Tuan (2003: 199) concludes, “Eventually, what was strange town and unknown space becomes familiar place. Abstract space, lacking significance other than strangeness, becomes concrete place, filled with meaning. Much is learned but not through formal instruction.” The relation to place does not always develop from strangeness to meaning in global project mobility, but Tuan’s emphasis on the relevance of place and how people learn place is of high relevance.

Regarding the experiences recalled in the diaries written by practitioners in project industry it is possible to shed light on their specific character using a combination of different perspectives. On the one hand there are different interpretative processes involved of both individual and social nature. On the other hand these patterns of interpretation clearly correspond with an inner existence space of an unconscious or preverbal nature. The experience of moving from one culture to another is partly structured as a fantasy, an individual interpretation arising from human inner space: touching on the hopes and fears of people.

Concerning the general experiences of place recalled in the diaries it needs to be underlined that it is primarily everyday things that strike the practitioners with otherness. Still, these separate and minor experiences of e.g. things feeling, smelling, tasting and looking different and further attitudes and reactions evoked as a result of this are very quickly generalized into a general experience of the place. This is often articulated in a simple manner with words like ‘here, this culture, this place, this country and this environment’. Locations of experiences become places including perceiving, doing, thinking, and feeling in a certain way. (Walter 1980-81: 162) The essence of place “lies in the largely unselfconscious intentionality that defines places as profound centers of human existence” (Relph 1976: 141).

Travelling abroad is often felt to be an adventure, a journey into the unknown, bearing strong connotations of otherness and evoking the dimension of imagination and fantasy in the way the practitioners recall their experiences. The practitioners often describe the new place in relation to fiction as e.g. the most beautiful place on earth (with reference to a movie) or maybe as the home of an adventurous character from some novel they have read. The place was also on and off experienced in terms of the non-real, similar to being in a movie or not being part of things that happened. This shows that when something out of the ordinary enters our horizon "our motivation model is activated so that alternative models can take over as perception-structuring patterns." (Holm 1995: 131). In a symbolic way these interpretative patterns offer meaning and structure through the dialogue between the outer world and the inner existence space, "i.e. through both a contextually and culturally bound process and an individual reflective process where values, emotions and expectations play a part." (Illman 2004: 163f, 262)

Experiences of the places are constituted by a combination of the otherness experienced and the need to relate to this otherness in a way that is in accordance with both the inner need and interpretative patterns at hand. The inner need having a more preverbal nature leaves room for a process of articulation whereas experiences of the other culture are described in ways that are very similar to each other i.e. interpreted and structured according to specific patterns or models. The diarists find interpretative models from e.g. media stories and fiction but the diaries also reveal how experiences of the environment are affected and reshaped in dialogue with feelings of social solidarity. The practitioners' socialisation into the team together meant taking part in a linguistic screen of e.g. stories and jokes similar to the pre-understanding shaped by e.g. media-stories. Both seem to exert a strong influence on the individual's way of interpreting, understanding and experiencing the new environment.

These interpretative patterns reinforced an experience of the place usually connoting conflicts and problems. The sense of something ordinary is relegated to the background and leaves place for an expectation of the adventurous. This implies that also the unpleasant and frightening is perceived as natural or expected in the specific environment. The place they lived and worked in was generally perceived as chaotic, meaningless and threatening. For the individual this involved suspicion, uncertainty and dissolution of acquired norms. Fearing e.g. that they might have been cheated by the taxi-driver or the waiter reminded them of the "well-known fact" that in places like this one should always be suspicious.

Apart from this I find it important to underline that the experience of the place and the instant recognition of its otherness also is constituted on both a phenomenological and psychological level. The sense of otherness forced upon the individual through interpretative patterns and often articulated by the team corresponds with other dimensions. It is obvious from the diaries that the otherness is felt in the skin, it hits the eye, and it invades the mouth and the nose in a way that strengthens the sense of otherness and evokes an inner psychological dimension. At the same time sensations of the place touches on people's imagination, their fantasies, their desires and their fears. The journey into the unknown becomes a journey into the unconscious. In the diaries this is reflected e.g. in the ambivalent character of the experience of the other place.

During an interview one project manager explained to me how well he remembered the excitement he felt at the beginning of his career when he travelled abroad. Now, after many years of travelling it was totally different: *"Now, it is just waiting all the time, in airports, hotels and so on, and in between that there is nothing."* In this he acknowledges another side of international work-related mobility that is not only about the other culture in itself but just as much about the felt conformity of a global place: airports, hotels and offices looking the same around the world and requiring the same way of being and acting, but somehow associated with lack of identity and relatedness. This also highlights a very significant pattern. In the beginning or before the journey the place quite easily evokes emotions related to longing after something that is more perfect and in more contiguity with the self, i.e. the potential or promise embedded in human mobility. Unfortunately this side of the imagination evoked is very vulnerable and dissolves very fast in confrontation with the new environment and interpretative patterns at hand. The longed for journey to a warm and beautiful paradise ends up in a hot and stinking hell. As it was stated in one of the diaries: *Honestly speaking I would like to go home at once. This country is so dirty and seems to be pretty awful in other ways too. A war is all that is missing, but I hope that they will not start something like that. You could sure call this place if not hell on earth but at least a big ass-hole. Maybe I will feel different later, but I dare to say that it is more probable that this impression just will grow stronger.* A pendulum moving between the desire of a paradise and the fear of a hell seems to hide in the depth of the experience, similar to that we experience in the otherness of people we meet. The ambivalence is one of both strong sympathy and aggression (Kristeva 1988; Gomez 1997: ch. 9).

In the diaries experiences of the local place often revolve around a triptych of something alien, chaotic and hostile. Separate experiences are recorded and interpreted

in similar fashion and these are also infused with strong and negative feelings. Uncertainty and irritation aroused by minor everyday experiences are reinforced by more extreme experiences, maybe in a narrative form and told by colleagues. Altogether this contributes to create an overall and generalised experience of the place characterised by a subjective position of estrangement, suspicion and hostility, contrasted mainly by the non-place of the global corridor. These experiences seem to correspond with the inner self of affective structures and elements of fantasy in a way that will be highlighted further.

Acting out the fantasy

Attitudes and stereotypes of the project team were manifested also in patterns of behaviour. As will be exemplified these might sometimes be seen as strong overreacts or not in correspondence with the actual situation or appropriate considering the different goals of the project team. Instead, the patterns of action are meaningful against the background of fantasies embodied in the experiences of the place. It was expected that members of the project-team should be assimilated into the team, which included that they rendered some of their individuality. Further, in this assimilation it was expected they should adopt the group's separatist attitudes to the new culture.[7] Concerning e.g. the general feeling of suspicion and expected hostility, one of the diarists recalls a sense of ambivalence: "*I was asked to come and play football at the local Spanish Club by the guy who sold me my washing machine. He had also taken me to lunch once and he was a nice guy. But these kinds of situations are difficult. You are not used to them and instantly ask yourself what the hell that guy wants from me.*" For this diarist it becomes difficult to react according to any other feeling than that of suspicion even though he was not comfortable with this choice.

Local people are easily approached with suspicion and intolerance. They are easily referred to in derogatory terms, such as children, for example. This is a way of expressing how incompetence and lack of independence on the part of the local workers is experienced, implying that they cannot be entrusted with responsibilities. In references to local authorities a similar pattern could be discerned but here it is of course necessary for the team to be more respectful. This does not, however, hinder the way in which dishonesty and inconsistency is stressed.

These kinds of attitudes – or interpretations – are also manifested in behavioural patterns. They clearly have an interface with how the actual relationships are structured and lived. Opinions, questions, suggestions, offers and problems are not immediately taken seriously but looked upon with glasses of distance and distrust as

superficial, trivial or not to be relied on. In a similar manner arguments put forward by the local workers are easily considered to be irrelevant, lacking in objectivity or manipulative. They are neither believed nor trusted. Sometimes they are even assaulted and they become targets for aggressions and derogatory behaviour more easily. One of the diarists recalls the following incident: "*At that time he was so drunk that he first suspected that the waiter had stolen 50 dollars from him. Later he started to suspect that it was the host (i.e. the customer) who had stolen the money. His official dinner did not go so well and the customer was not satisfied."*

Apart from the aggressive and derogatory behaviour the estrangement between the team and the local environment implies, the experience of the place seems to correspond also with a feeling of being detached. Above this is reflected as a lack of interest and will to listen, but on a more fundamental level we encounter indifference, ignorance and apathy. As the following citation points out the indifference implies an erased moral sense: "*In this place you just get into bad shape and the small sense of responsibility and energy that is left is ruined. Even though you do not drink alcohol the common depression and the circumstances kill your capacity for thinking."* The place felt to shape feelings, attitudes and behaviour from the inside. This is even more vividly expressed by one of the experienced engineers as he explains the character of the life-style to one of the practitioners: "*Look at us old men here. We are lechers, alcoholics, divorced, ageing vagabonds, but the truth is that we built this factory and it will be a flagship of our company. These project-jobs are like this: When the boss commands the team to go to the destination place, all Ten Commandments are already broken."*

Some of these examples are extreme and might have been articulated in an exaggerated manner. Thus, they should not always be understood literally but more as pregnant images. They express how shifting from one place, home, to another place, the destination, includes shifting from one life-attitude to another. Place and moral subject are interrelated.

Within psychology the term acting out refers to dramatized and symbolic behaviour that build on inner conflict. It is defined as a way of repeating in action instead of remembering by verbalizing and considered a way of escaping confrontation, i.e. the aggression or desire that might be awakened in relation to e.g. the therapist is directed towards another person. (Hamilton 1990: 219; Blanck & Blanck 1994: 223) Acting out might thus refer to concrete behaviour, which in its symbolic and dramatized sense actualises an inner conflict. To apply the concept acting out in this specific context is

[7] See Berry (1990) for a discussion on different aspects of acculturation such as assimilation and separatism.

of course dependent on the fact that the behaviour can be considered as inappropriate, i.e. it implies a clear destructive or contra-productive dimension with regard to the explicit ambitions of the project team.

The vulnerable self

Above I have highlighted a transformation of patterns of action, thinking and relating reflected in project-based global mobility. I have suggested that this is partly due to the intimate relationship that exists between place and the human self. The analysis confirms that man is an indissoluble part of his surroundings: "[F]ar from being of little or no account to human personality development, [the non-human environment] constitutes one of the most basically important ingredients of human psychological existence". (Searles 1960:5f, 23) Altogether, this affirms how "The world and the self inform and redefine each other constantly" (Pallasmaa 1996:27). Apart from what is usually acknowledged or analysed within psychoanalysis, human relatedness is not directed towards human beings alone but also towards the non-human environment. Defining the kind of psychological framework needed to stress the transformative dialogue between place and self is a prerequisite for a firmer understanding, especially as the concept of a human self in varying forms might be traced down through history. Carry (2000) argues that it dates back to Augustine and e.g. in the late 19th century it was used as a way to grasp the depths of human being, e.g. in the sense that William James (1890) separated the ´me´ from the 'I', whereas the 'me' is the publicly recognizable and empirically knowable aspects of the self and the 'I' refers to the self as knower, the subjectively based agency. With modernism and e.g. the behaviouristic school the 'I' self was left behind and we faced an explosion of data on the 'me' self. Under this discourse of modernity the self was conceptualised as a unitary, autonomous and machine-like entity and knowable to scientific research. The cognitive school of today is pictured as the main heir of this approach to the human self. (Brinich & Shelley 2002, pp. 9f) Still, the assumption that place is evocative of inner affective structures implies that the human self is not fixed in a cemented structure or development but related to both the human and non-human surroundings in transformative ways. Among several contributors to a new approach in contrast to that of late modernity Daniel Stern is probably the one who most clearly considers the human self to be of great theoretical importance. The self is put at the centre of his thinking as an intersubjective matrix. (Brinich & Shelley 2002, pp. 40f).

Stern's perspective on the self differs from main theory in psychoanalysis in two important ways. Firstly he considers the self to be a main organising principle in human life (Stern 1991:32). Secondly he considers the self to dwell in continuous

restructuring throughout life due to its intersubjective nature. Thus, the central character of the self is one more of growing and evolving, than that of fixated being or stability. According to Stern (1991: 39ff) a sense of self develops during the two first years of infancy through four different processes or domains of relatedness between self and other. The evolving self is characterised by an integrating and organising process, whereas different perceptions are linked to each other (Stern 1991: 59f). This evolves into a sense of a core self, separate from the environment, and characterised by continuity and contiguity, whereas the coherence experienced through the other becomes a barrier against fragmentation, depersonalisation and disintegration (Stern 1991: 83ff). The third domain or process is the subjective self, whereas the affectivity of both the self and the other is recognised and realised as a possibility of preverbal intersubjectivity, based on sharing attention, intentionality and affectivity (Stern 1991: 140f). The last organising sense of self is the verbal domain, whereas the symbolic relatedness is developed e.g. as language. Thus, the relatedness is transformed and given a character, which is less direct and more impersonal (Stern 1991: 172f). The sense of self is, according to this, characterised by several different dimensions, i.e. a sense of agency, a sense of coherence, a sense of continuity, a sense of affectivity, a sense of contiguity, a sense of order and a sense being able to communicate. (Stern 1991:21) In the analysis above the experiences were often articulated in line with these senses.

A central idea in Stern's theory is that the four domains are not replacing each other as they develop during infancy. Earlier domains are instead integrated and included in the following. Thus, we might e.g. be deeply affected by verbal relatedness in a way that is significant for our understanding of place as an existential symbol: We are e.g. *touched* by the words of another and temporality, spatiality etc might *speak* to us in a way, even though we might feel unable to translate or explain it in a definite way. This perspective implies a non-cognitive and non-rational perspective of man's relation to place whereas the flow of images and impressions cannot be halted and analysed in a definite manner. With the expression of Pallasmaa (1996:24) the environment is perceived more like the swimmer senses the flow of water through his skin.

Stern's theory articulates a fundamental vulnerability of the human self. It implies that the human self is dependent on the environment in a constitutive and radical way enabling transformations of patterns of actions, thinking and relating. Thus, it illuminates how a changing environment in an ambivalent way is experienced both as an inner possibility and an inner risk. Therefore, the mobility reflected in the material corresponds with e.g. the longing of presence, recognition, experiencing

meaningfulness and order and for contiguity and communicative interaction of the evolving self, similar to how Pallasmaa (1996:16,22) defines the task of architecture:"[T]he task of art and architecture in general is to reconstruct the experience of an undifferentiated interior world, in which we are not mere spectators, but to which we inseparably belong." Still, in the case analysed in this article on international project-based mobility, the place - as it encounters the individual on a phenomenological, a psychological and an interpretative level - is not capable of facilitating the continuous relatedness and evolving of the self. The self deteriorates. The physical invading and thus overwhelming otherness of the place and the interpretative patterns confirming this on a verbal level evokes both disappointment and a fear of disintegration, which is both experienced and acted upon. In addition to the fact that Stern's theory on a general level meets the requirements implicitly postulated in theories of place referred to in this article, the applicability of the theory on the material makes it a comprehensive way of grasping the existential dimension of place. Its potential relevance needs to be further explored.

Between trust and distrust

Using the concept existential place to understand the experience of the other culture and the mobility related to this is a comprehensive way to make sense of how the other place sensitises the relationship between the self and the other. Place is evocative of preverbal patterns of relating, but of course not always in the extreme ways that the above used exemplas might indicate. They were chosen for their ability to articulate the extreme side of the experience. On a more general level, we are grasping a quality of an evasive relationship that is always both individual and unique. Interpretative patterns, psychological prerequisites, dependency on the project-team, etc are all important and interrelated factors in the reaction to the other place. It is, therefore, hazardous to generalize about this relationship. Still, from a psychoanalytical perspective it is possible to recognize and acknowledge some motives in this process, which are of a more general character when reflecting on the psychological dimension. In contrast to environments that facilitate the contiguity to the other, the other culture together with continuous mobility seems to evoke a fear related to the loss of the other. Thus, it awakens both aggressive and depressive reactions.

Considering the character of the experience evolving around the triptych of something alien, chaotic and hostile I find especially the contribution of Melanie Klein (1997; 1998) to be relevant. Her distinction between a schizo-paranoid position and an integrative position in human beings illuminates the dynamics in human relatedness overall but especially human relatedness towards otherness. Igra (2002) has indicated

that encounters between strangers evoke feelings of estrangement and vulnerability and due to this, e.g. racism. In this he has recognized not only the relevance of individual inner dispositions but also the relevance of both culture and society, i.e. an interpretative and social level. Attitudes articulated in culture and society evokes and corresponds with different positions of an inner and preverbal nature. In the study presented in this article we find a similar dynamic.

Lavinia Gomez (1997:200ff) describes the two positions in a comprehensive and general manner. On the one hand we are constituted by our need to be in affinity with others and experience similarity, mutuality and contiguity. This is the integrative position that structures relationships between self and others along with trust. Out of this grows the human ability e.g. to share and to feel empathy and to communicate, i.e. a basic sense of relatedness. On the other hand, we carry a need for individuality. This is experienced as difference, distance and conflict and this schizo-paranoid position is structured by distrust. It is the more selfish part of .the human self in search of possible threats and ways to dominating and being in control over the environment.

These positions are not pathological. They are affective attitudes shaping human relationships towards the environment on a preverbal and non-cognitive level. In normal cases they intertwine and the human self makes use of both of the positions, not one or the other. But, experiencing a change that touches on our fundamental relationship these positions are evoked and challenged. As we enter the other place we are directed towards the longed for possibilities of a developing and holding relationship to the other. The integrative position dominates as a fantasy of contiguity, affinity and understanding. As we realise the otherness of the place we feel a loss of the other. Further, as Stern argues (above), as our selves are intimately dependent on the other, loosing the other is experienced as loosing parts of the self. In the diaries this is often reflected as e.g. suspiciousness towards local people, a suspicion that the others are trying to cheat or deprive oneself of something. Also the threat of the disintegrated self, falling apart, is reflected in the experience of e.g. the environment as chaotic and lacking order. Fundamental threats towards the self are likely to activate an aggressive need to defend the self.

In addition to the aggressive attitude evoked by the other place and structured by the schizo-paranoid position it makes sense to also picture this as a kind of depression. It is acknowledged within psychoanalysis that aggression acted out against external objects in the form of e.g. destroying friendships and family relations, work-relations and work-opportunities might be considered a form of depression. To some extent this is what might be reflected in the diaries. Important relationships, both personal and

professional, are ruined both by attitude and by concrete behaviour. Bleichmar (1996: 941) states that depression in these cases is "the result of a failure in the creation of conditions that allow for the realisation of wishes that are central to the person". Following Stern the condition lacking is the very fundamental contiguity to the other. We can see how the presence of the other is destroyed or denied due to the reaction to the place. This is clearly reflected in how the project team relates to local people. They stress the lack of understanding and communication and picture the local people in a stereotypical and derogative manner and deprive the interaction mutuality and affinity. Further, the experience of the place as meaningless also corresponds to this fundamental experience. It is recognizing the lacking relatedness between the place and the self.

International work-related mobility sensitises the self in a very fundamental way. Place and mobility are existential symbols corresponding with the central interrelatedness of the self through which it experiences e.g. meaning, order and communication, a life-structuring and developing relatedness. Moving into the other place evokes this possibility, but the experience of the otherness invading the self on many levels, creates a challenging experience of loosing this relatedness. This activates both aggressive and depressive attitudes, whereas by the fear also comes true. Thus, the strange space does not develop into a familiar meaningful place.

It might be added that the nature of this experience in the long run does not strengthen the tie to the home of the subject. Instead, people get stuck in a life-style. As cited earlier, people who are continuously mobile on a global level, might not feel comfortable anymore in their home country. This shows that the problem is not between a certain culture or place and a certain individual. The ability of the self to relate to other has deteriorated and this affects relationships in general. What is deteriorating is not only the relationship between the self and a specific culture but the inner relatedness fundamental to human being. Thus, what is left is only the place of conform and grey corridors of international mobility. The external compression or intensification of time and place corresponds with an inner space fading out.

Potential space is the space in which creativity becomes possible and communication meaningful, a space in which we are alive as human beings. This phenomenon exemplifies one of the possible disruptions of potential space discussed by Ogden (1985), referring to Winnicott (2001). One possible disruption he points to is the case when the "dialectic of reality and fantasy collapses in the direction of fantasy" (Ogden 1985: 133). This means that fantasies in terms of e.g. strong inner fear or longing takes over a more nuanced experience of reality. On a more general level this implies a

rejection of the real presence of the other and possibilities to create a meaningful relationship. It is possible to acknowledge this dynamic on a more general level due to the symbolic relationship between man and place, suggested by Pallasmaa and Holm and the vulnerability of the self, suggested by Stern. International work-related mobility might in some cases disrupt these intimate inner relationships, due to the compression of time and place it animates.

The moral subject and worldview

Ability and disability to communicate is deeply rooted in the human self, which also has been exemplified in this article. As Donnel B. Stern (2003:843) writes concerning communication "all understanding is context dependent, and one of the most significant contexts [-] is the self state." Thus, the parallel between self other relations, such as identification, and Gadamer's concept fusion of horizons is underlined (Gadamer 1999). The relevance of the self-other positions articulated by Klein (1997; 1998) can be recognized on a more general level. These inner positions correspond as we have seen with patterns of actions and thinking, and not only with the ability to understand and communicate. They represent a preverbal attitude that structures our behaviour in accordance with trust or distrust, estrangement or affinity. In this sense the reaction to moving between places needs to be reflected upon in relation to concepts such as morality and worldview.

Kurtén (1997: 109f) has criticized our understanding of worldview and underlined that the emphasis on the theoretical and conscious elements are so strong that some deeper, and for the life-attitude more central elements tend to get lost sight of. This, he writes, gives the wrong impression that we are able to choose worldview and it is neglected that parts of our worldviews are not rational in the sense that they are conscious choices. Instead Kurtén (1997: 155) uses the word "profound orientation" to direct our attention behind the facade of the rational choice. He writes: "A dimension of basic trust seems to provide us with a clue to how people, on a deeper level, cope with their lives [-]. There seems to be an connection between the way in which basic trust is anchored and the levels on which a person finds important values in his or her life [-]." (Kurtén 1997: 167)

Following Kurtén in this argument, we find that the interrelatedness of self and place and its connection to inner positions of trust and distrust is constitutive for worldviews to some extent. The existential dimension of international work-related mobility affects worldview from the human inside. In this case we are of course not looking at the rational opinion people have of their worldviews, but on the attitudes and the behaviour expressed in everyday life and how they might be grasped as varying

profound orientations. Further, this is also of relevance for morality. Before experiencing a moral dilemma or that an action has a moral dimension to it, the world has appeared to the subject as moral in some sense.[8] Thus, the practitioners recognize both that "regular rules do not apply in this place" and that the place might deprive them of their sense of responsibility, as mentioned above. The experience of the place is related to a sense of loosing the moral feeling and becoming detached.

A similar way to understand morality has also been advocated by Bauman (2002) concerning the postmodern challenge. According to him we have, due to the modern worldview, misinterpreted ethics and morals as rational constructs. In contrast to this he underlines that our fundamental and ambivalent relatedness constitutes our selves as moral. He argues that our first sense of being a self is through relatedness and therefore also deeply rooted in trust. We, our selves, are thus continuously constituted in our morality. In this Bauman denies the possibilities or risks of both universalism and relativism. Morality is more or less the recognition of our vulnerability in our dependence on others and vice versa. This sense of relatedness is not the same as acting according to certain norms or values. Underneath articulated norms and values dwells a moral subject constituted by its ability to relatedness.

Place, I would like to argue, is thus of relevance for humans as moral subjects, shaping both worldview and morality. The way Bauman understands the self and its moral character bears resemblance to Kurténs way of comprehending worldview. Both are constituted by inner affective and preverbal patterns of trust and distrust, quite similar to the positions Klein has articulated. Another and slightly similar way of looking at this ambivalence in human relatedness is Martin Buber's well known distinction between I-Thou and I-It relationships and the human movements between distance and affinity. Illman (2004) has showed how Buber's distinction offers a comprehensive way to grasp the interpretative dynamic of intercultural encounters.

Conclusion and final remarks

As I have argued elsewhere, the ability to cooperate and communicate in intercultural encounters is dependent on interpretative patterns used to comprehend the relationship itself. How we report cultural encounters in our language creates a way of experiencing the reality by which different relationships are established. This is how we create the conditions necessary to be able to understand and communicate, but these conditions are more a matter of a personal attitude than of knowledge of the other culture. (Nynäs 2001; 2004; Illman & Nynäs 2005) Further, Illman (2004) has showed how the interpretive patterns are used both to create cultural borders and to

[8] Raimond Gaita made me observe this fact in a lecture he held at Åbo Akademi University, Finland 13.10 2003.

cross borders and how these patterns, e.g. stereotypes are created in a correspondence between inner and outer demands serving the need of the individual to grasp the situation. These findings were based on an earlier analysis of the same and additional material as was used in this article. The interpretative dimension has been strongly present also in this article, but I have aimed at bringing the focus in another direction, i.e. the preverbal positions embodied in both interpretative patterns and experiences of place.

In this analysis, focusing work-related international mobility, I have highlighted an existential dimension significant for understanding psychological patterns observable in this specific context – and maybe similar contexts. Referring to an existential dimension I assume an intimate relationship between the human self and place, i.e. place being evocative of preverbal ways of relating and thus affecting patterns of action, thinking and relating. A central result in this analysis is that the compression of time and place, characteristic to work-related international mobility in a global network based society, seems to constitute a challenge to the human self and its intersubjective matrix of relatedness different from the attraction and possibilities often experienced in other forms of international mobility. International mobility has a transformative effect on the psychological level and further on human relatedness and worldview in general, being evocative of a strong ambivalence between trust and distrust.

The perspective outlined in this article is relevant in intercultural communication theory in several ways. It shows how the ability to cooperate and communicate in some multicultural contexts might be dependent on deep lying affective attitudes connected to the sense of self. In this it follows one of the main ideas the interpretative perspective. Cultural encounters are evasive settings as they resist reductionism and a mechanistic view. Still, it also differs from an interpretative perspective. One of the strengths of interpretive perspective is its possibility to acknowledge the human ability to cross borders, create understanding and experience affinity regardless of cultural origin. In this article I have shed light on some borders in the interpretative dimension and acknowledged the role of the vulnerable human self. The dependency of the human self on its structuring and organising relatedness both to other beings and the environment overall is significant to understanding the intercultural challenge. The organising function of the self makes it one of the main factors that give interpretative processes a direction of either trust or distrust. This dynamic is not erasable from human encounters and intercultural theories will always have to integrate the element of estrangement along with its repetitive character.

Further, when it comes to questions of e.g. intercultural competence in international projects we have to relate to the challenge of estrangement in ways that recognize the character of this dimension. It is a dimension we will have difficulties to touch with the means of cognitive efforts such as education, learning-programs and other similar enterprises. As I (Nynäs 2004) have argued elsewhere the main problem in intercultural communication is not about sending, receiving and de-coding messages in different cultural settings but about the fact that these particular processes of understanding are dependent on deep-lying attitudes and relations embodied in interpretative models. Cultural differences are highly significant in this interpretative process, but the crucial question is found on a more general level: how is estrangement created and de-created and with that the ability to understand and communicate? A successful search for intercultural competence acquires observance of this question, as it is the core question for communicative competence.

In accordance with this I argue that the unlocking of communication and cooperation barriers is strongly dependent on the ability of the subject to reflect on itself instead of the preoccupation with the other typical to intercultural theory and further by the degree of support given by the team and the organisation in this particular aspect. Thus, to achieve communicative competence in international projects, the challenge is not to prepare individuals for 'how to be and what to do' in certain cultures, but to work on a more general level focusing on creating space for the interpersonal dimension and with this the sense of relatedness.

With regard to what I have underlined above, intercultural competence in project-cooperation is dependent on whether or not the organisation is capable of recognizing the challenge to the self constituted in this specific life-style and find different ways to strengthen the fundamental relatedness of the individuals. This might be in conflict with the demands caused by the functionality of projects. As I have stressed elsewhere (Nynäs 2004) this context needs to stress the role of interpersonal communication, face to face, and to enable both qualitative and quantitative continuity and contiguity in cooperation and communication. Further, the project team and its management hold a key position. It can contribute to the development of a cooperative and communicative culture, well aware of the concrete problems created by separatist attitudes. Further it needs to maintain a culture that supports the cultural adaptation of its members, well aware of the strong tendencies towards assimilation. Considering the project members there is a need to continuously reinforce the aspects of competence mentioned above during the project and prepare them for how to take responsibility for cooperation and communication on an interpersonal level and to give relevance to the general attitude

to and experiences of other cultures. It might also be relevant to choose members on behalf of their tolerance to mental stress and their self-reflective capacity and prepare them for the stress of estrangement.

Both the otherness of the specific place and the lack of spatial presence in the global corridors, are associated with a possible disintegration of the self. This is manifested both in the ways the important inner balance of fantasy and reality is disrupted towards an experience of place as chaotic, meaningless and hostile and in the way this fantasy is acted upon. Due to the experienced significant other not being present or not fulfilling inner preverbal expectations this evokes both aggression and depression. Therefore, it seems as if the compression of place and time in international work-related mobility in a fundamental way is alien to the human dependency on intersubjective relatedness. Relatedness disrupts into psychological resistance transforming patterns of action, thinking and relating in the concrete context at hand.

The existential dimension of place and mobility is reflected upon in terms of a symbolic correspondence between place and the human self, as conceptualized by e.g. Pallasmaa (2001). Illuminating and studying this existential symbolic dimension of both place and mobility relies on some important methodological and theoretical assumptions. As I have shown the experience of place is constructed on several levels: A socio-cultural dimension suggests the necessity of an interpretative level. The individual processing of the socio-cultural elements in an inner space suggests a psychoanalytically oriented analysis and the presence of the physical surroundings a phenomenological. Further, in addition to acknowledging this multilayered construction of the experience it is just as important to recognize how these levels are theoretic constructs and representations. In the concrete lives and in the way they are mirrored in different materials they are inseparably interwoven with each other, i.e. there is an on-going process in which the different levels articulate, define, redefine and shape each other.

One of the strengths of an interpretive perspective is its possibility to acknowledge the human ability of relatedness regardless of real or imagined borders. In this article I have implicitly shed light on some limits concerning this perspective and acknowledged the role of the vulnerable human self in international work-related mobility. This brought me to reflect on the psychological framework implied in the analysis of the existential dimension of place. The suggestion of place being evocative of inner affective structures relies on a concept of the human self not defined as a cemented structure or development but strongly related to both the human and non-human surroundings in transformative ways. Such a vulnerable dependency of the

human self on its structuring and organising relatedness both to other beings and the environment overall plays a significant role in this analysis.

Concerning the human self I have underlined the relevance of applying Daniel Stern's (1991) perspective of the human self. Stern's approach differs from main theory in both psychoanalysis and cognitive psychology as he clearly puts the self at the centre of his thinking as an intersubjectively organising matrix. Applying his theory enables a comprehensive way to grasp the relationship between place and self. As Stern also points to central traits in the intersubjective matrix of human relatedness he also enables detailed studies, a possibility only slightly touched upon in this article. In addition to this I find the writings of others in the field of object-relations theory illuminating, among them especially Melanie Klein (1997; 1998). Klein's notion of two fundamental positions and the resemblance this bears to Buber's dialogue philosophy was relevant in this analysis. It provided a link to a more general discussion on the symbolic relevance of place in the transformation of worldviews and life-attitudes.

Due to the intimate dependency of the self, international work-related mobility sensitises the self in a very fundamental way and evokes deep lying affective structures of a psychological nature. Due to the loss of relatedness experienced in the alien cultures and the non-place produced of ongoing and conform mobility this a far reaching potential to affect patterns of attitudes, thinking and acting together with e.g. the will and ability to communicate and cooperate. The continuous mobility in project-cooperation analysed in this article is to some extent characteristic to the globalisation process of today. Therefore, problems arising from the loss of a sense of self might be more evident in the future both on an individual and an organisational level. How to face this challenge is a difficult question, but we might recall Pile's (2005: 182) word about the possibility of dreaming the real city anew, and of course the fact that the existential dimension high-lighted in this article is one among several constituents of the context studied here.

References

Bach, Robert L. (2003): Global mobility, Inequality and Security. In *Journal of Human Development*, 4, 227-245.

Bauman, Zygmunt (1999): *Globalization: the human consequences*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bauman, Zygmunt (2002): *Postmodern Ethics.* Oxfordshire: Blackwell Publishers Ltd.

Berry, J. W. (1990): Psychology of acculturation: understanding individuals moving between cultures. In *Applied cross-cultural psychology Volume 14,* Brislin, Richard W. (ed.). USA: Sage publications.
Blanck, G. & Blanck, R. (1994): *Ego Psychology: theory and practice, Second Edition.* New York: Columbia University Press.
Bleichmar, Hugo B (1996): Some subtypes of depression and their implications for psychoanalytical treatment. In *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 77.
Brinich, P. & Shelley, C. (2002): *The self and personality structure.* Philadelphia: Open University Press.
Callard, Felicity (2003): The taming of psychoanalysis in geography. In *Social & Cultural Geography*, 4.
Carry, Phillip (2000): *Augustine's Invention of the Inner Self. The Legacy of a Christian Platonist.* New York: Oxford University Press.
Castells, Manuel (1996): *The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture. Vol. 1: The Rise of the Network Society.* Oxford: Blackwell.
Dicken, P. (1998): *Global shift: transforming the world economy*. New York: Guilford Press.
Gadamer, Hans-Georg (1999): *Truth and Method*. New York: Continuum.
Gomez, Lavinia (1997): *An Introduction to Object Relations.* Chippenham and Eastbourne: Free Association Books Ltd.
Gustafsson, M & Wikström, K (2004): *Time to think - managing projects through reflection*. Article presented at the IRNOP VI Conference in Turku, Finland, 25-27 August 2004. (Proceedings).
Hamilton, N. Gregory (1990): *Self and others: object relations theory in practice*. London: Jason Aronsons Inc.
Holm, Nils G (1995): Religious symbols and role-taking. In *Sundén's Role Theory – an Impetus to Contemporary Psychology of Religion*, Holm, Nils G. and Belzen J.A. (eds). Åbo: Åbo Akademi.
Igra, Ludvig (2002): *Den tunna hinnan mellan omsorg och grymhet*. Falun: Natur och Kultur.
Illman, Ruth (2004): *Gränser och gränsöverskridanden. Skildrade erfarenheter av kulturella möten i internationellt projektarbete.* Åbo: Åbo Akademis förlag.
Illman, Ruth & Nynäs, Peter (2005): *Kultur, människa, möte. Ett humanistiskt perspektiv*. Lund: Studentlitteratur. (in print)
James, William (1890): *The principles of psychology*. London: Harvard University Press.

Jandt, Fred E. (1995): *Intercultural communication*. London and New Delhi: Sage publications.
Kjellqvist, Else-Britt (2004): *De får vingar: anden och psykoanalysen – en civilisationskritik*. Stockholm: Carlsson.
Klein, Melanie (1997): *Envy and gratitude.* London: Vintage.
Klein, Melanie (1998): *Love, guilt and reparation*. London: Vintage.
Kristeva, J. (1988): *Étrangers à nous-mêmes*. Paris: Fayard.
Kurtén, Tage (1997): *Bakom livshållningen. Studier i moderna livsåskådningar och deras begreppsliga förutsättningar.* Åbo: Åbo Akademi.
Leppäkari, Maria (2005): Berusad av Jerusalem. Jerusalemsyndromet i religionsvetenskaplig belysning. In *Nordisk Judaistik*, 25/2.
Magherini, Graziella & Zanobini, A. (1987): Eventi e piscopatologia: il perturbante turistico: nota preliminare. In *Rassegna Studi pischiatrici*, 74.
Nynäs, Peter (2001): *Bakom Guds rygg. En hermeneutisk ansats till interkulturell kommunikation och förståelse i industriella projekt.* Åbo: Åbo Akademis Förlag.
Nynäs, Peter (2004): Intercultural competence in international projects – an interpretative approach. In *Projects and Profits*, ICFAI University Press, vol IV, december 2004.
Ogden, Thomas H. (1985): On Potential Space. In *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, vol. 66.
Pallasmaa, Juhani (1996): *The eyes of the skin. Architecture and the senses.* London: Academy Editions.
Pallasmaa, Juhani (2001): *The architecture of image. Existential space in cinema.* Hämeenlinna: Building Information Ltd.
Pile, S. (1996): *The body and the city. Psychoanalysis, Space and Subjectivity.* London: Routledge.
Pile, S. (2005): *Real Cities. Modernity, Space and the phantasmagorias of City Life.* London: Sage Publications.
Rankin Katharine N. (2003): Anthropologies and geographies of globalisation. In *Progress in Human Geography*, 27.
Relph, Edward (1976): *Place and Placelessness.* London: Pion.
Riain, S. Ó (2000): Net-work for a Living. Irish Software Developers in the Global Workplace. In *Global Ethnography. Forces, Connections and Imaginations in a Postmodern world*, Burawoy, M. et. al.(eds). Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Searles, Harold F. (1960): *The nonhuman environment. In normal development and in Schizophrenia*. Madison: International Universities press Inc.
Sibley, David (1995): *Geographies of exclusion*. London: Routledge.
Stern, Daniel (1991): *Spädbarnets interpersonella liv ur psykoanalytiskt och utvecklingspsykologiskt perspektiv*. Stockholm: Natur och Kultur.
Stern, Donnel B. (2003) The Fusion of Horizons. Dissociation, Enactment, and Understanding. In *Psychoanalytic Dialogues* 13(6), 843-873.
Tuan, Yi-Fu (1975): Place: an experiential perspective. In *The Geographical Review* 65, 2.
Tuan, Yi-Fu (2003): *Space and Place. The Perspective of Experience*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
Urry, J. (2000): *Sociology beyond societies. Mobilities for the twenty-first century*. London: Routledge.
Walter, E.W. (1980-81): The place of experience. In *The Philosophical Forum 12.*
Winnicott, D.W (2002) Playing and Reality. Hove and New York: Brunner-Routledge.

Diana Petkova & Jaakko Lehtonen

Cultural Identities Revisited.

Aspects of Finnish-Bulgarian Intercultural Communication

The aim of this paper is to discuss the concept of cultural/national identity as a projection of collective self/other image on the one hand, and as a result of historical and social processes on the other. The discussion is based on data collected in Bulgaria and in Finland in February-March 2004 when 200 Bulgarian and 200 Finnish students were interviewed with questionnaires. Bulgaria and Finland were chosen to be compared as small nations at two different "corners" of Europe. Both of them have preserved their cultural traditions and customs throughout centuries under foreign rule.

On the basis of the data collected this study examines the constituent elements of national identity and gives some preliminary suggestions about the different ways these elements are combined in the Bulgarian and the Finnish identity construction. A hypothesis is built that cultural/national identity is a social-psychological phenomenon that evolves gradually. Namely in this process of gradual evolvement the individuals constantly confirm, reconfirm, reject or transform their own images of the country and of themselves as members of the nation. In order to prove this hypothesis the paper will use some concrete answers and statements made by the Bulgarian and the Finnish students. It will also revisit some concepts of national identity applying them to the empirical data collected. On the basis of empirical investigation of the data some of the existing cultural stereotypes and prejudices will be revealed too. The paper also dwells upon the question to what extent these may play a role in the intercultural communication.

On the concept of national identity

National identity is a subspecies of collective identity, which could be defined as an identity shared with a group of others who have some characteristics in common (Ashmore & al. 2004: 81). We share here the vision of social constructivism according

to which cultural/national identity is being continuously constructed, shaped and reshaped by individuals and communities. However, "imagined communities" (Anderson, 1983) and "invented traditions" (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983) should not be exaggerated to the point where even the common ethnic origin or the racial differences are denied for the sake of the socially constructed myths and beliefs (Eller, 1999). Some scholars state that the national identity is deliberately and in some cases even artificially created collective identity (Kedourie, 1960: 1; Gellner, 1983: 48). The national identity can really be considered a cultural construct of a concrete historical epoch and social milieu. But at the same time it also reflects the innate necessity of the individual to identify him/her with the collective. Whether the collective identification will be with the clan, the tribe, the ethnicity or the nation, it depends only on the stage of development of the human material and non-material culture. That is why even if the nation could be considered to be artificially created, from a social-psychological perspective the national identity itself is not an artificial construction.

Some previous empirical studies found out that national identity is based on articulated identity claims that sometimes could be radically changed in time and space or in different social situations. For example according to Bechhofer & al. (1999) one and the same person could change his/her national identity claim ("I am British", "I am English") depending on the social circumstances. However, the same holds true with all the other collectives too: professional identities, gender identity, religious, race identity, etc.

Our empirical study proves to a great extent the idea of the constructivists that not the cultural community itself but its image as well as its comparison to the images of the other communities sustained by members of the culture underlie the cultural identity. From the collected data it becomes obvious that the cultural/ national identity is established predominantly on the perceptions of the individuals about themselves, and especially on the fact what they think they are and they are not.

Anthony Smith is one of the few authors who propose a concrete definition of national identity. He states that the elements of the national identity are: 1). an historic territory, or native land; 2). common myths and historical memories; 3) a common mass, public culture; 4). common legal rights and duties for all the members; 5). common economy with territorial mobility for members (Smith, 1991: 14). From this definition it becomes evident that for Anthony Smith the national identity comprises in itself both

cultural-psychological and political elements. In our analysis we will try to find out which of the above mentioned elements predominate in the identification with the national community of the interviewed Bulgarians and Finns. In this respect, examining the stereotypes and the auto-stereotypes of the Bulgarians and of the Finns, as well as the basic elements of their collective identification, the paper will show some mechanisms by which two concrete cultural identities are established and shaped.

The questionnaire

During the spring term 2004, 200 Finnish and 200 Bulgarian university students were asked to fill up a questionnaire on national and cultural attitudes. In Bulgaria the informants came from three of the biggest universities – the University of Sofia "St. Kliment Ohridski", the Technical University of Sofia and the Technical University of Varna. In Finland the questioning embraced students from the universities of Jyväskylä, Kuopio and Oulu. The interviews were deliberately oriented towards the younger people in the two countries because in our opinion the transformations of cultural identities are more evident and could be more easily detected amongst the youth.

We are aware of the shortages concerning the validity of a questionnaire research. One of the weaknesses is the so-called social desirability bias: the informants report on their attitudes towards some social groups, for instance, what they know is politically correct but not what is their honest and guileless opinion. Second, in a self-report it is easy to report idealized opinions because reporting is behaviour without consequences.

The Bulgarian and the Finnish students answered to questions connected to their cultural and national self-consciousness as well as to the way they perceive "the other" and "the different". They were asked about the way they accept some other nationalities and ethnicities, such as the Russians, the Americans, the Germans, the Turks, the Greeks, the Swedes, the Gypsies, etc. This was done in order to anchor the mutual Bulgarian-Finnish evaluations to the most relevant national other-images in each country. However, in this paper only aspects of the Bulgarian-Finnish intercultural perceptions will be analyzed, i.e. the opinions of the Bulgarians about the Finns and of the Finns about the Bulgarians, as well as their knowledge about each other.

Factual knowledge of the target culture

A group of questions in the questionnaire concerns the existing knowledge of the Finns about the Bulgarians and of the Bulgarians about the Finns. Discovering how much they know about each other, we can later suppose to what extent the stereotypes and prejudices are engaged in the construction of the image of the "other". The students are given a map of Europe, on which they should mark with a cross where Bulgaria and Finland are situated. 96 Finnish students know exactly where Bulgaria is situated. The others have crossed on the map some other countries such as Romania (34 persons), Hungary (12), Albania and Macedonia (8), Slovakia (7), Ukraine (7) and even Portugal (1).

The Bulgarian students are only a little bit better in geography than the Finnish students. 110 of them know where Finland is situated, while the others have marked with a cross Sweden (30), Norway (16), Russia (9) and even Ireland (1).

The students' next tasks are to guess how big the population of the other country, what its biggest minority and what its predominant religion are. Most of the Finns (117 persons) think that the Bulgarians are about 10 million people, 54 of them state that they are about 5 millions and 19 persons suppose the Bulgarians are about 20 millions. The situation with the Bulgarian respondents is similar. 86 Bulgarian students suppose that the Finns are about 10 million people, 71 think they are 5 millions and 26 students suppose the Finns are about 20 millions.

Fig. 1. Bulgaria and Finland on the map

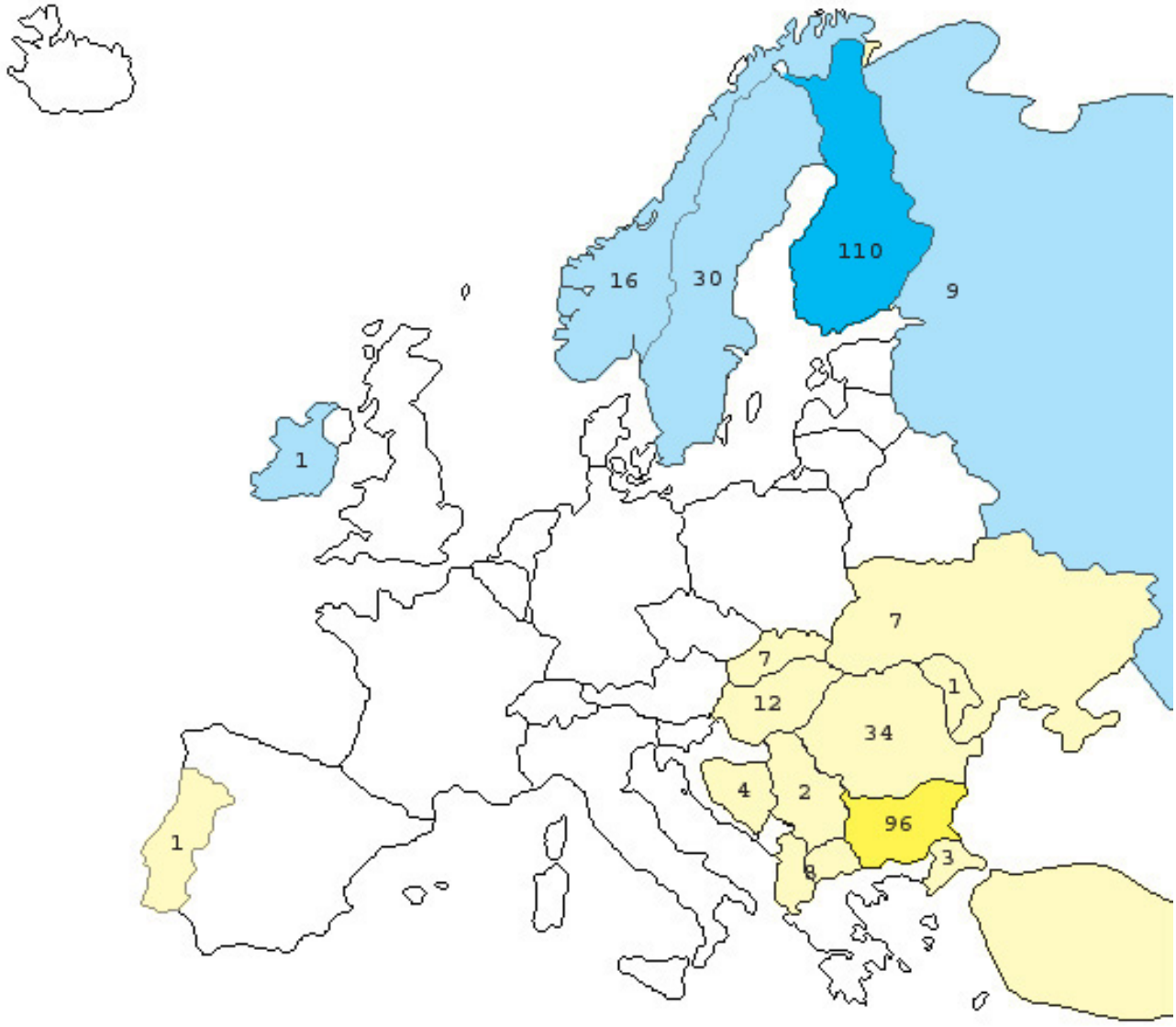


Table 1 (in numbers)

	Where is Bulgaria/Finland situated?											
nationality of the respondent	empty	Bulgaria	Romania	Mol-dova	Hungary	Yugo-slavia	Albania & Macedonia	Turkey	Bosnia – Hertzegovina	Slovakia	Ukraine	others
Finnish	14	96	34	1	12	2	8	3	4	7	7	12
Bulgarian	18											17
Total	32	96	34	1	12	2	8	3	4	7	7	29

	Finland	Sweden	Norway	Russia	Total
Finnish					200
Bulgarian	110	30	16	9	200
Total	110	30	16	9	400

Only about half of the Bulgarian and Finnish students have a proper knowledge about the biggest minority of the other country. 114 Finns suppose that the biggest minority in Bulgaria is the Turkish one, while 57 respondents think there is a Russian minority. Among the Bulgarian students 93 answer that the biggest minority in Finland is the Swedish one, 74 think there is a Russian minority and other 31 suppose there is a German minority.

Similar answers are also given in relation to the most common denomination in the other country. 118 Finns are sure that the Orthodox Christianity prevails in Bulgaria, 57 people state that the Bulgarians are Catholics and other 16 think they are Muslims. 101 Bulgarian students point out that the Finns are Protestants, 72 think they are Catholics and 22 persons state they are predominantly Orthodox. One Bulgarian student even thinks that the Finns are Muslims.

The group of the questions cited above aims to gather some data about the knowledge that the Bulgarians and the Finns possess about each other. These questions do not intend to provoke any opinions or attitudes about the other nationality. From the collected data it becomes obvious that the knowledge of the Bulgarians and the Finns is quite insufficient. Only about half of the answers to all the questions are right. This means that there are some significant gaps in the knowledge of the Bulgarians and of the Finns about the other country. Usually when there are gaps in the knowledge of the "other", they are filled with some already existing stereotypes and prejudices. That is from where we can suppose that a great part of the image of the other nationality will be based on stereotypical assumptions.

To a great extent the lack of enough knowledge is due to the fact that most of the Finns and especially of the Bulgarians have never been in Bulgaria or Finland. Only 8 of 200 Finns state that they or some relatives of theirs have been in Bulgaria several times. The same fact about Finland is mentioned by only 3 Bulgarian students. Most of the interviewed Bulgarians (181) have never been to Finland and the predominant part of the Finns (132) has never been to Bulgaria either. This means that most of the Finns and Bulgarians do not have their own impressions from the country but rely very much on what they have heard or read about it, i.e. on some other sources of information. That is also from where many of the existing stereotypical images of the other country

come. This observation is confirmed by the data given below about the assumed personality of the "other".

The image of the "other"

Of the Bulgarian students 110 think that the Finns are quiet and reserved, while 122 Finnish students suppose that the Bulgarians are social and loud. 116 Bulgarians state that the Finns are organized and disciplined people and 126 also mention that that they admire the Western values. Even from these short answers a portrait of the two nations can be drawn, although rather partial and roughly outlined. According to the Finns the Bulgarians are sociable people who speak too loudly. According to the Bulgarians the Finns are quiet and reserved, disciplined and well organized nation admiring the Western values.

Fig. 2.

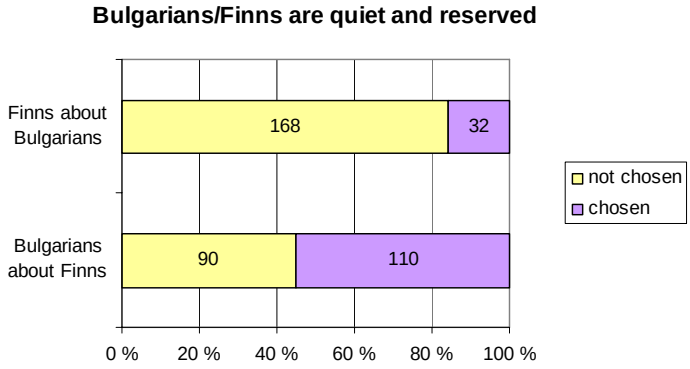
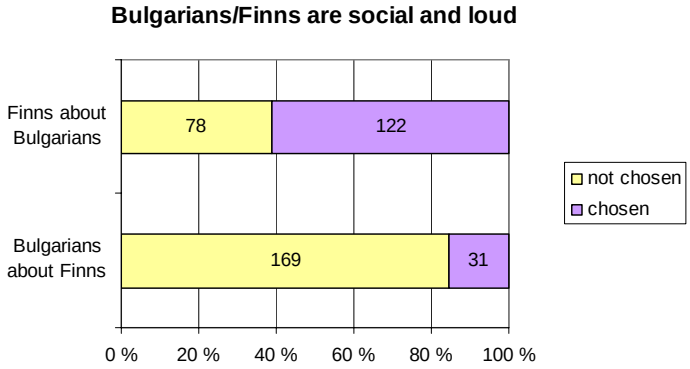


Fig. 3.



This means that the images of the Bulgarians and of the Finns are not only based on some stereotypes but they tend to oppose to each other. What the Finns are supposed to be, the Bulgarians are not and vice versa. These assumptions may depend on the fact that Bulgaria is a southern country while Finland belongs to Northern Europe. That is why the Bulgarians are directly associated with the supposed characteristics of the southern peoples while the Finns – with what is thought to be typical of the northern societies.

Despite the expectations this fact does not hinder the willingness for Finnish-Bulgarian intercultural communication. Although the opinions differ, as a whole the

Bulgarians and the Finns are very well disposed to each other. 158 Finns and 156 Bulgarians would like to have as a friend a Bulgarian or a Finn. At the same time 84 Finns and 123 Bulgarians would be happy, if they or some of their close relatives marry respectively to a Bulgarian or a Finn.

Collective self-appreciation

Some of the other questions in the questionnaire are deliberately orientated towards the national self-consciousness of the interviewed students and towards the image that they have of their own nation. The respondents are asked to compare the standard of living, the clothes, the achievements of the sportsmen, the music and the education of their own country with the international level.

The Finns are united in their opinion about their standard of living. Of the Finnish students 144 think that Finland has a higher standard compared to the international level. At the same time the Bulgarians agree that their living situation is rather complicated. Only 2 people state that Bulgaria has a higher standard than the international level, 180 students think the standard of living is lower than the international level and 14 Bulgarians point out that it is the same.

Fig. 4.

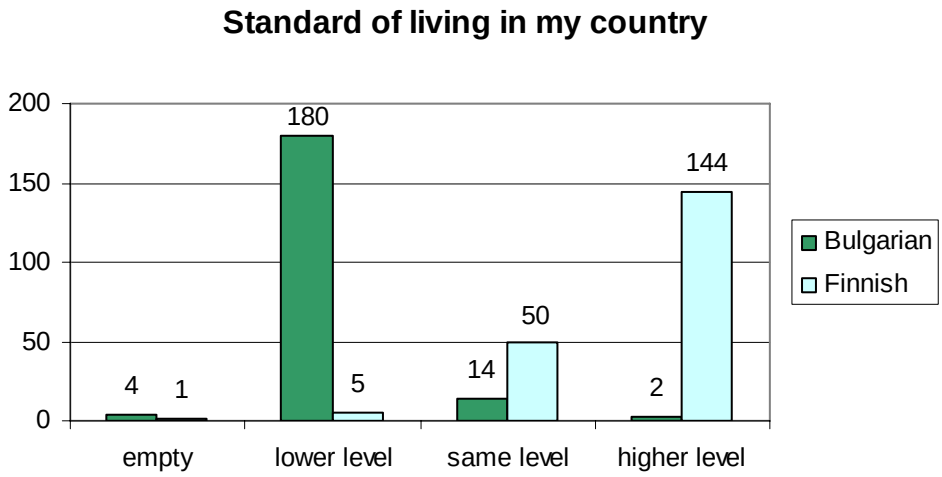


Fig. 5.

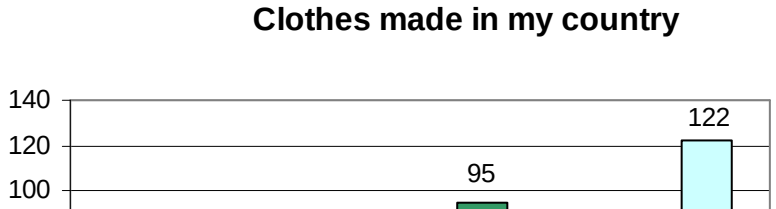


Fig. 6.

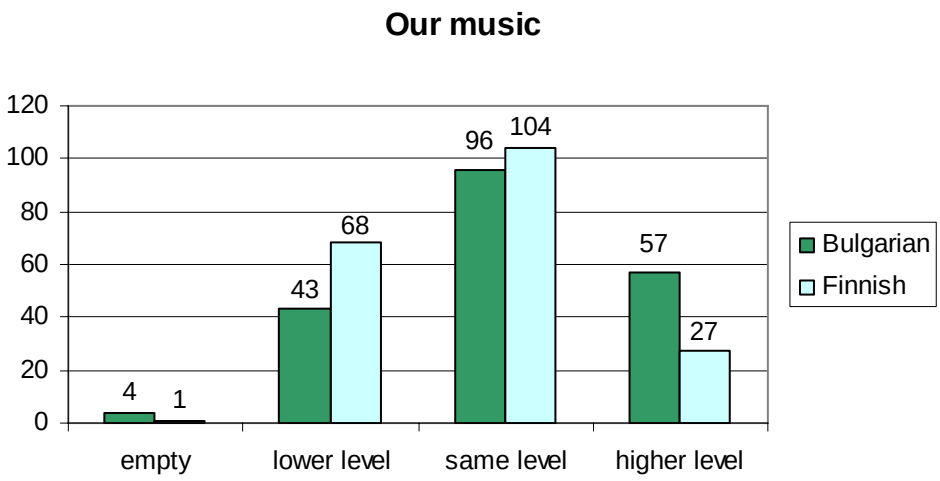

Our music
120
100
80
60
40
20
0
4
1
43
68
96
104
57
27
empty
lower level
same level
higher level
Bulgarian
Finnish

Fig. 7.

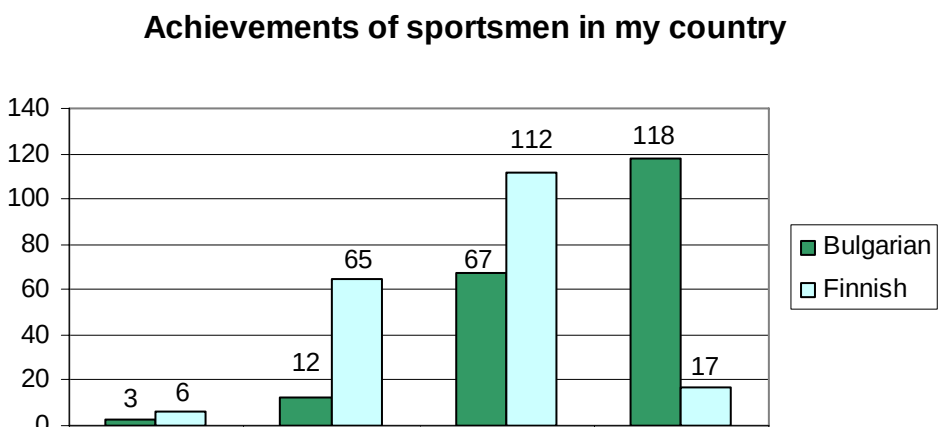
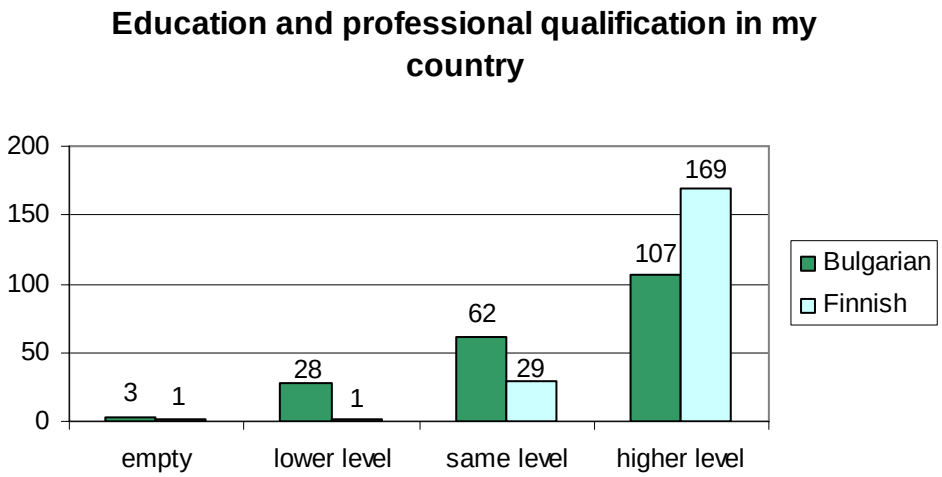

Achievements of sportsmen in my country
140
120
100
80
60
40
20
0
3
6
12
65
67
112
118
17
Bulgarian
Finnish

Fig. 8.



The answers given to the next question are rather similar. 122 Finnish students say that the clothes made in their own country have a better quality than the international standard, while only 28 of the Bulgarians think that their own clothes are better than the clothes produced elsewhere.

The answers differ only in relation to the achievements of the Bulgarian and the Finnish sportsmen. Only 17 Finns are quite satisfied with the achievements of the Finnish sportsmen, while most of them (112 people) think that they are at the international level and 65 find them being below it. The Bulgarians – quite the opposite – 118 of them state that the achievements of the Bulgarian sportsmen are above the international level and only 12 students think they are below it.

Both the Bulgarians and the Finns are not quite satisfied with their native music. 104 Finns think that it is the same as the international level, 68 people state that it is below it and only 27 think it is above it. The Bulgarians give similar answers – 96 of them think their music is at the international level, 43 state it is below it and 57 are convinced that it is above it.

Together with the standard of living the Finns are most satisfied with their education – 169 of them think that it is better than the international level, 29 state it is the same and only 1 student think it is below it. The Bulgarians also believe their education is good – 107 of them state that it is above the international level, 62 think it is the same, and 28 consider it to be below the international level.

Here some comments should be necessarily made. Firstly, it may seem that the question is not posed correctly. It may seem one could not compare the standard of living, the achievements of the sportsmen; the education and etc. of his/her own country with the international level, because such a level is very difficult to be detected. Something more - it is doubtful whether it exists at all. Anyway, the question was deliberately elaborated in such a way because we expected to receive some information about the cultural self-consciousness of the Bulgarians and of the Finns. We hypothesized that the way people set the international level reveals how strong or weak their cultural self-consciousness is. The replies to this question do not refer to any facts or statistics revealing what exactly the international level is and how it could be detected. They refer predominantly to the national self-confidence of the interviewed students. The answers given provide us with information how "good" the Bulgarians and the Finns think to be in different areas.

It is true that the economic situation in the two countries can be characterized as "rather satisfying" or "bad" because Finland belongs to the well-fare countries while Bulgaria is in a stage of economic and social transition. In this respect the answers of the students reflect to some extent the real economic situation in the two countries. But at the same time the comparison of the standard of living, the clothes, the education, the music and the achievements of the sportsmen are connected mostly to the image that the Bulgarians and the Finns have created for themselves, as well as to their own self-esteem.

From the answers shown above it becomes clear that the Finns are much more culturally self-confident than the Bulgarians. The Finns believe that in some respect they are better than the other nationalities. These results are a surprise for the researcher only in relation to the Finnish case but not to the Bulgarian. According to the research data collected in Finland in the 80s of the 20th century the Finns suffered a low self-esteem. The first references to this characteristic in literature are from year 1700. The lack of self-confidence is reflected in the negative content of self-reports. In a study made in the year 1991 the informants were asked to write down adjectives which best described the Finns. Among the ten most frequent adjectives seven were clearly negative. When the same test was repeated five years later, among the ten most frequent adjectives there was only one negative – "envious". The obvious explanation of the dramatic change was the acceptance of the country as a full member of the European Union. This event removed the old fear of being forgotten and discriminated by the other Europeans.

In another study on the national identities of some Nordic cultures (Finland, Sweden, Estonia, St.Petersburg area in Russia, and Latvia) (Lehtonen, 1998) some evidence was found to assume that the strength of cultural identity is projected in the way informants relate the achievements of their country and countrymen to the concept of 'international level'. If the cultural identity is strong, people tend to set the level of comparison beneficial for their own culture, if it is weak, the bar will be set unrealistically high. This explains why the estimates made by informants from these countries were so similar to each other, although the differences in the standard of living were dramatical at the time of data collection (1992-3).

From some previous investigations made in Bulgaria it is known that during the last decade the Bulgarians suffer of low self-confidence. Our data confirm the results received from a representative poll opinion on the national identity of the Bulgarians carried out at the end of 1995. More than 1000 people were then asked about their feelings to their country, their region and even to their native town or village. Most of the inquired Bulgarians stated that they were proud with the achievements of the sportsmen from their country. On the second place the Bulgarians tended to identify themselves with their national historical and cultural heritage coming from the antiquity (Dimova and Tilkidziev, 1996).

In such a way our empirical data confirms the results received from the representative poll opinion in 1995. Nine years after that the predominant part of the interviewed Bulgarian students states that they are proud mostly with the achievements of their own country's sportsmen. This similarity between the answers of the Bulgarians, given in 1995 and in 2004, leads us to the following conclusion. When a given country is in a difficult economic situation, the people cannot be proud of their standard of living but look for some other arguments in order to sustain their national self-consciousness. These arguments could be the historical past, the cultural heritage or some contemporary national achievements. This fact also explains why the Finns are more critical to their music and to the national sportsmen than the Bulgarians. They have enough reasons to be proud with the economic situation in their country as well as with their standard of living. In such a way the criticism to their sportive and cultural achievements cannot affect too much their national pride. While if the Bulgarians criticized their historical heritage or their contemporary cultural setting their national self-confidence would be badly hurt.

It is also interesting that when the Bulgarian students were asked to compare the standard of living, the clothes, the education, the music and the achievements of the sportsmen in their country with the international level, many of them complained that the question is not posed correctly. Some (3) even wrote it in the questionnaire and refused to answer the question. At the same time no one of the Finnish students made any comment or even observed the fact. Probably in the difficult economic and social situation the Bulgarians are much more sensitive to the testing of their national feelings than the Finns.

This observation can lead us to the next supposition that the Bulgarians suffer much more from a crisis of their national identity than the Finns. Even if it may be so, the Bulgarians are more positively thinking about the future of their country than the Finns. 128 Bulgarian students claim that after 10 years the situation in their country will be better than now, 51 state it will be the same and 20 think it will be worse. Only 21 Finns are sure that after 10 years they will live better than now, 164 suppose that the situation will be the same and 21 think it will be worse.

Such a result could be expected. If the Finns are quite satisfied with the economic and the social situation in their country, they would be rather inclined to think that it will remain the same. Most of the Bulgarians are totally dissatisfied with the present-day

situation in their national state. That is why they hope their life will be better in the future. Thus on the one hand, both the Bulgarians and the Finns have positive expectations for the future. On the other hand, it may be said that the Finnish optimism is passive and reserved, while the Bulgarian optimism is active and openly expressed.

There is another question in the questionnaire that refers directly to the national self-consciousness of the interviewed students. They are asked to choose between the next statements:

a). I feel only Finnish or Bulgarian

b). I feel more Finnish or Bulgarian than European

c). I feel as much Finnish or Bulgarian as European

d). I feel more European than Finnish or Bulgarian

35 Finnish and 32 Bulgarian students stated they feel only Finnish or Bulgarian. 118 Finns and 80 Bulgarians think they are more Finnish or Bulgarian than European. 42 Finns and 82 Bulgarians feel as much Finnish or Bulgarian as European. 5 Finns and 5 Bulgarians define themselves as more European than Finnish or Bulgarian.

Fig. 9.

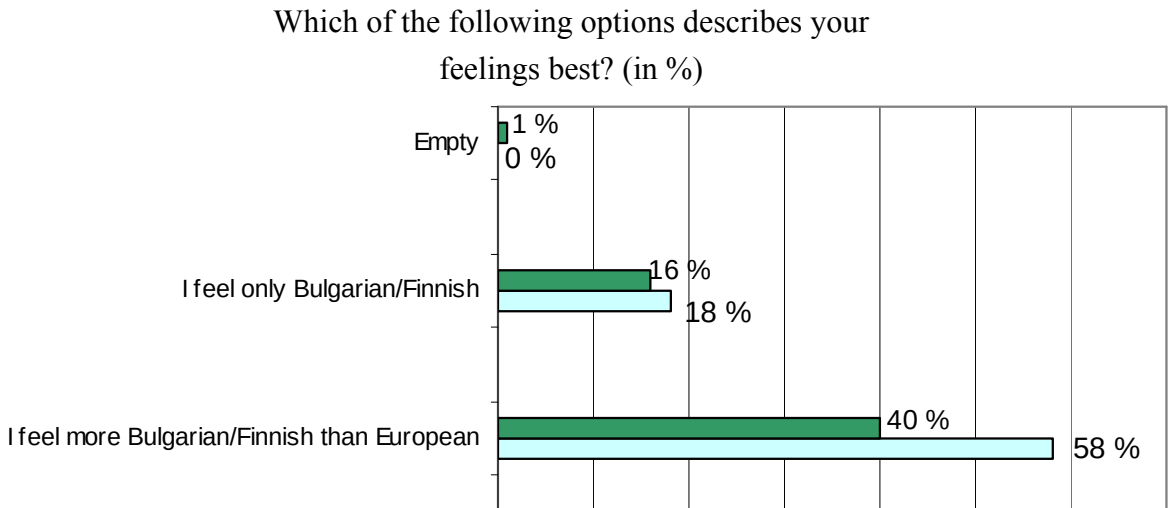


Table 2 (in numbers)

	Finnish	Bulgarian	Total
		1	1
I feel only Finnish/Bulgarian	35	32	67
I feel more Finnish/Bulgarian than European	118	80	198
I feel as much Finnish/Bulgarian as European	42	82	124
I feel more European than Finnish/Bulgarian	5	5	10
Total	**200**	**200**	**400**

From the data above a conclusion could be made that the Bulgarians are a little bit more European oriented than the Finns. These results correspond with the previously made observations about the national self-confidence of the Bulgarians and of the Finns. If the Bulgarians suffer from a relatively low self-confidence and if they are totally dissatisfied with the economic and the social situation in their country, it is then normal to suppose that a considerable part of them will be European oriented rather than sticking to their own cultural roots. The Finns, on the contrary, are much satisfied with their economic and social situation. So, it is quite normal to gravitate more to their own nation than to bigger communities, such as the European one.

With the next question we wanted to know whether the interviewed Finns and Bulgarians view themselves more as a part of their national collective or they gravitate to larger multinational collective, such as Europe. The Bulgarian and the Finnish respondents were asked to say whether they agree or disagree with the statement: "There is a common European identity, shared by all the Europeans". Most of the Finns (87 students) disagree with the statement to some extent, 65 of them agree to some extent and 48 totally disagree with it. No Finnish student agrees totally with the statement. The Bulgarian answers are not similar at all. Most of the Bulgarians (98) agree to some extent, 62 of them disagree to some extent, 25 totally disagree and 15 totally agree.

It turns out that the predominant part of the interviewed Bulgarians is inclined to believe in the existence of European identity, while the majority of the Finnish students does not share the opinion. The comparison between the answers given by the Finns and the Bulgarians confirms once again that the Bulgarians are more pro-European oriented than the Finns.

There are two basic reasons for the Bulgarians to have an acute European consciousness. Firstly, to feel European for many Bulgarians means to strive for a better standard of life. And secondly, from the Renaissance epoch until nowadays the idea of Europe has played a considerable role in Bulgarian culture. It has influenced not only the political and the social life of the country but also the way the Bulgarians perceive and think of themselves.

Discussion

All the data discussed above sends us back to the definition of national identity drawn by Anthony Smith. We can elaborate his statement further and say that at each stage of its development the national identity is a product of the concrete social and cultural situation. That is why some elements of the national identity are not the same in the different nations. For example some nations form their sense of national belongingness on the base of the living standard and the economy. Other nations shape their national feeling in relation to their cultural heritage or sportive achievements. To a great extent these elements of the national identity are a situational construct that vary according to the economic, cultural, political and social setting in the country.

From a social-psychological point of view every individual has a necessity of strong cultural identity. The latter corresponds directly with the high self-opinion. To be proud or disappointed/ dissatisfied with something in which you do not have any or almost any personal contribution may seem strange but it affects considerably the self-belief and the self-reliance of the individual. That is why quite unconsciously the individual looks for arguments to sustain his or her cultural identity. That is from where the variability of the elements of the national identity comes. In the different social and cultural situations the individuals tend to stress different arguments in order to support their sense of national and cultural belonging.

This fact also means that in a given political, economic or social setting some elements of the national identity are underlined while others are ignored or even underappreciated and denied. From here we can conclude that the national identity is a social-psychological phenomenon that is being continuously constructed, reshaped and transformed in relation to the social processes.

The data discussed above lead us also to the conclusion that the cultural identity is both conscious and unconscious phenomenon. The individual becomes aware of it in a concrete cultural context. There are usually two main possibilities the cultural identity to become a conscious fact. The first one is when the individual actively compares his/her cultural community with the other cultural communities. In this respect the personal experience plays a significant role. The more direct contacts the individual has with other cultural communities, the more he or she becomes aware of the cultural differences. In other words, the more the individual learns about the others, the more he or she learns about himself/herself too.

The second possibility the individual to become conscious of his/her cultural identity is when a given community undergoes a crisis. In difficult economic, political or social circumstances the sense of the belongingness to the community is always tested. The national identity undergoes a crisis too that could be felt both on a national and on a personal level. Paradoxically the crisis situation provokes the individuals not only to question their cultural/ national identity but also to be more aware and conscious of it. In this sense the crisis of a given cultural community could also contribute to the acute awareness of the individuals about their cultural identity.

References

Anderson, Benedict (1983) *Imagined Communities*, Verso, New York

Ashmore, Richard D.; Kay Deaux & Tracy McLaughlin-Volpe (2004) *An Organizing Framework for Collective Identity: Articulation and Significance of Multidimensionality*; In: Psychological Bulletin, vol. 130, No. 1: 80-114

Bechhofer, Frank; David McCrone, Richard Kiely & Robert Stewart (1999) *Constructing National Identity: Arts and Landed Elites in Scotland*; In: Sociology, vol. 33, No. 3: 515-534

Dimova, Lilia & Nikolay Tilkidziev (1996) *Profiles of National Identity: between Localism and Ethnocentrism*; Sofia: Foundation "Free Initiative" [in Bulgarian language]

Eller, Jack David (1999) *From Culture to Ethnicity to Conflict. An Anthropological Perspective on International Ethnic Conflict*; Michigan: University of Michigan Press

Gellner, Ernest (1983) *Nations and Nationalism*; Oxford and Cambridge: Blackwell

Hobsbawm Erik & Terence Ranger, eds. (1983) *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Kedourie, Elie (1960) *Nationalism*, Oxford and Cambridge: Blackwell

Lehtonen, Jaakko (1998) *Minäkuva, vieraskuva ja kansallinen identiteetti* [Image of Self and Other and National Identity] In: Viron Suomen-Instituutin vuosikirja 1995-1997; pp. 44-69; Helsinki-Tallinn

Smith, Anthony D. (1991) *National Identity*; London: Penguin Books

Giovanna Pistillo

How can meaning be translated? Carrying meaning across languages and cultures: the interpreter's challenge

Abstract

Interpreter-mediated communication can be defined as communication involving at least two interlocutors who do not speak the same language (the primary parties), and an interpreter. Like primary interlocutors, the interpreter has to build meanings on the basis of the language used and of the other factors involved in communication, namely context, gestures, form and – above all – intention. Many of these factors are strongly influenced by the cultural background of the speaker, and need to be "interpreted" as such. The interpreter must be able to decode the verbal and nonverbal elements of communication alike, in order to convey the meanings intended by the primary parties from one language to another (and from one culture to another) as faithfully as possible.

Through an introduction to the main issues involved in mediated communication and the presentation of some real cases, this paper analyses the construction of meaning in interpreter-mediated events.

1. Introduction

Our lives are a continuous process of communication: we communicate through our bodies, through the words we utter and those left unsaid, through shown and hidden emotions, through arts, through our actions and behaviour. The study of communication is the study of human life in its countless manifestations, and is therefore a multidisciplinary field by definition.

Any communication process implies at least two parties, who are directly or indirectly involved in some kind of sharing of information. At a very basic level, a baby may cry to inform his/her mother that s/he is hungry, and the mother may in turn smile to or cuddle him/her to say everything is fine. At a level of far greater complexity, we may think of intelligence services exchanging encrypted messages to share information about an illegal traffic of war weapons. Between these extremes endless communication acts occur at different levels.

Communication systems may be more or less codified, with such codes being shared by groups of varying size and complexity. A red light at a crossroads is understood as meaning "STOP" by the great majority of people throughout the world. The beeping sound accompanying the green light at pedestrian crossings (meant to help blind people know when to cross the road safely), instead, is less widespread, and its function will arguably be recognised only by those who live in or have visited a place where such system is in use.

The above examples show very different types and tools of communication, though language remains by far the most widespread and powerful form of communication. All these cases have two things in common: first, there are always at least two parties involved (mother and baby, sender and receiver of the encrypted message, the traffic regulation authorities and the community of drivers and pedestrians); second, there is always a need to provide some kind of information to the other party.

On the basis of these preliminary remarks, communication may be defined simply as the sharing of information between people on different levels of awareness and control (Allwood 1985). Despite the apparent straightforwardness of this definition, however, a great number of elements come into play which make successful communication an extremely complex goal to achieve.

Communication is about the way material reality interconnects with mental processes, where "material reality" stands for the object, the concrete piece of information that one wishes to share in a communicative process, e.g. "I'm thirsty", "There's a bottle on the table", etc. The mental processes, on the other hand, are intended as the mechanisms inside our brains which lead to and are influenced by both factual understanding and emotional reactions.

As Dahl (2004) points out, in the semiotic perspective communication appears as a social and mutual act of sharing of concepts that is carried out through the use of signs. 'Signs' and 'language use' are closely interconnected, in that language can be understood as a system of signs. Both language and signs are the visible tools through which communication takes place.

To better identify the elements making up communication we may use a simple metaphor: John (the sender) sends a bunch of flowers to Mary (the receiver), to tell her he loves her (message / intention). The flowers are the tool, the sign John entrusts with carrying his intention out to Mary: clearly, in this case the flowers play the role that in a communicative event would most often pertain to language.

Some elements in this metaphor point to the deep implications of such a simple act as that of sending flowers to one's beloved. In John's mind, "*flowers equal love*". In

order for Mary to fully appreciate and understand John's intention, it is essential that she share the same frame of mind in which "*flowers equal love*". If this is not the case (Mary may be allergic to flowers, for example) the communicative event will result in one of Austin's "infelicities", that is "the things that can be and go wrong" in communication (Austin 1975: 14).

But the reason at the basis of the misunderstanding may be more subtle: for example, John may have sent chrysanthemums, which in some countries (like Italy) are only taken to the cemetery, leaving Mary puzzled if not hurt. The point here is that we all have a particular frame of mind, which interprets signs and builds meanings for us. Frames of minds are strongly influenced by our cultural backgrounds, that is the experience of life we have gathered in the particular geographical, historical and social context in which we have grown up and/or happen to live.

In this perspective, a misunderstanding takes place when a different message or intention is transmitted than the one intended. We will call the message content and intention "meaning". It is worthwhile remarking, however, that although differences in the frames of mind do represent potential causes for misunderstandings, if the participants in communication are consciously aware of them such situations will become opportunities or – as Dahl (2004) calls them – "*golden moments*" for further exchanges, new discoveries and greater understanding.

2. Some general remarks on the study of spoken interactions

It is generally recognised that verbal language is the main tool through which most human communication is carried out. There are, however, great differences in the use of language depending on whether it is spoken or written. In this paper the focus will be on spoken language in interlinguistic / intercultural interactions.

An important issue in the study of spoken language has always been the difficulty to perform an analysis of talk as it is, that is in its oral form. Patterns of spoken language are usually studied on the transcriptions of talk. Interestingly, when we analyse such transcriptions we are actually looking at a written text, and the influence of centuries of studies based on written language will certainly be very strong. In this respect, it is interesting to remark that the study of talk as a whole (that is including its nonverbal features) only became possible when the first recorders (and later on video cameras) became available a few decades ago.

Wadensjö (1998) considers the written language bias as a major hindrance in interpreting studies. Her interesting approach to the study of interpreting activities

stems from the distinction between the concepts of "talk as text" and "talk as activity", taking a monological and a dialogical view respectively. The "talk as text" approach is focused on text production and text processing, and therefore is speaker-oriented. It indicates that meaning is inherent in the language that has produced a given text, and is the result of smaller units of meaning such as words and morphemes. In this view, language and language use appear as static and unchanging. In the "talk as activity" model, instead, language is only *one* of the instruments used in communication and is always accompanied by other types of activities. In our perspective, the most interesting aspect of this approach is that it considers sense making as a dynamic process in which participants are actively involved in the course of an interaction: meaning is not inherent in the words spoken, but is built by the participants in a given context (Wadensjö 1998).

Arguably, interpreting – especially in face-to-face interactions – is best analysed through the latter approach, which is closely connected to Goffman's concept of "participation framework". In the Introduction to his book *Forms of Talk* Goffman explains this notion as follows: "When a word is spoken, all those who happen to be in perceptual range of the event will have some sort of participation status relative to it." (1981:3) This concept is extremely important in the analysis of meaning construction, as it shows how the meaning of a word, utterance or conversation as a whole is determined by all the activities involved in the interaction, such as mental processes, emotional reactions, actual utterance of words, etc., which are interconnected and interdependent. The concept of participation framework also has interesting applications in the analysis of interpreter-mediated interactions, where the interpreter at the same time "happens to be in perceptual range of the event" and – even more importantly – is the person who is in charge of and has control over the exchange of information (and therefore communication) between the parties. This aspect will be further analysed in Section 4.

3. Cultures, identities, and meaning

As mentioned above, meaning is constructed by the participants in communication *together*. Very simply, we may say that successful communication occurs when the receiver understands the message he perceives through his/her senses exactly as the sender intended. In other words, the original intention should not be distorted in the process of communication i.e. through words, body language, prosody, etc.

Even when not distorted, however, all messages are subject to some sort of processing on the part of the listener. First of all, the listener naturally tries to infer the meaning of the message on the basis not only of the language used, but also of expectations determined by his/her frame of reference or "knowledge about the world" (Scollon & W. Scollon 2001). The notion of "knowledge about the world" is clearly related to the concept of "culture", intended as the entirety of elements that contribute to the development of individual identities. However, when discussing about intercultural communication, it is very important not to treat culture as an abstract entity. As Dahl (2004) puts it, cultures never communicate – people do. People's cultures can only be said to exist as embodied in individual human beings, who build the abstract notion of cultures into real identities.

Cultures exist at many different levels, and each of us is part of several cultural groups at the same time. Each individual is the result of the interconnection of all these: one can be at the same time a daughter/son, a wife/husband, an Italian, a cook, a teacher, a researcher, a friend of several people, a person born in a particular year, a Muslim, a woman/man, a wealthy person, a benefactor, etc. Such separate identities coexist side by side in any individual and it is their combination that makes that person unique, making up what Eriksen defines "cultural amalgams" (Dahl 2004). As the context changes, one or more of these identities will temporarily prevail over the others.

The idea of culture as something embedded in individuals exists side by side with the more traditional one, in which a culture includes those features which a particular group of people share in terms of values, world view, norms, Self, Others and life (Hofstede 2001). Following this model, we will have North American culture, Mediterranean culture, Italian culture, etc. The main drawback of this conception is the risk of running into generalisations and stereotyping. Certainly, there is no such thing as a "pure" or "typical" South African or German. However, where generalisations are used consciously, they can be a useful instrument to start and understand the main differences (as well as common ground) existing between different groups. In other words, while it is true that cultures are made up of different, unique individuals, it is also true that people belonging to the same group do share some assumptions, and therefore their behaviour can be somewhat more predictable.

How is this related to the issue of meaning construction in intercultural communication?

As mentioned above, individuals are cultural amalgams, and it is individuals, not cultures, that communicate. In this perspective, any communication becomes intercultural almost by definition. In the more traditional sense of "intercultural

communication", however, the term "culture" is used to express the acquired, distinctive characteristics common to a given group of people (Hofstede 2001). Because learned characteristics are shared by relatively large groups of people, intercultural communication often involves people having different geographical origins, values, norms, and – more often than not – language. However divergent, these two views of intercultural communication should not be seen as being in total opposition. In the dynamic process of meaning construction, cultural factors in the wider sense and individual factors play an equally important role. Through their personal interpretations of messages, participants affect the communication process while it develops. Goffman (1981) also points out that, in spoken interactions, alternating questions and answers are closely connected to each other, and therefore the interpretation of a message by its receiver directly affects the way in which the communication process will proceed.

A further, fundamental element in the determination of meaning is the situational context, intended as the time, place, purpose and participants of a given interaction. The situational context can, as a matter of fact, stress any of the individuals' cultural identities e.g. the professional one, and thus affect the outcome of the meaning construction process. For example, in hearing the word "fungo" during a presentation, an Italian biologist attending a scientific conference would immediately think of the meaning expressed by the English word "fungus". Yet the same person, reading a menu in a restaurant, would interpret the same word "fungo" as the one corresponding to the meaning of "mushroom". This is due to the fact that in the first case the context stresses the professional identity of the individual, who on that occasion would be, so to say, more of a biologist than anything else. In the second case, instead, it will be the "man", maybe "partner" or "friend", or "father" or "hungry person" identity to prevail over the others. This explains how inferences about meaning are made not only on the basis of some features internal to the individual, but also of external elements affecting the individual's response.

4. The construction of meaning in interpreter-mediated events

Interpreter-mediated events appear to be a special case of intercultural encounter, and therefore the role of the interpreter as cultural mediator appears to be fundamental although underestimated (Pistillo 2004). It is thus of great interest to analyse the process of meaning construction in this type of event.

One of the most interesting contributions to interpreting research in recent years has been Cecilia Wadensjö's *Interpreting as Interaction* (1998), already mentioned in Section 2. Her approach is based on a view of communication as an essentially dialogical phenomenon, whereby meaning is constructed jointly by the participants and does not result from the speaker's intentions and strategy alone. Wadensjö stresses that interpreter-mediated conversations are a special case of interaction, in that

"[…] the lack of communicative contact between two parties not talking each other's language is effectively remedied thanks to the interpreter. Yet while their indirect relationship is […] strengthened, a potential direct connection between the primary interlocutors may simultaneously be disturbed." (1998:12)

Wadensjö's words suggest a view of the interpreter which is very different from the image of 'translating machine' traditionally associated with this profession. The interpreter is seen as having the great responsibility of carrying meaning across, while contributing to the successful building of the relationship between the primary parties. Dialogue interpreting – which is the main focus of this paper – is the interpreting mode in which language can be said to have most of the characteristics of spontaneous spoken interactions. Among these characteristics are repetitions, hesitations, overlaps, discourse markers, etc. (Bazzanella 1994). While in conference interpreting the communication mode is mostly monological and the speakers often prepare (write) their speeches in advance, dialogue interpreting involves a dialogical communication mode. In these situations, very little planning is possible to the different participants, who must wait for the other party's utterance before deciding what to say i.e. how to respond. Backchannelling is another feature of this type of discourse, whereby participants (who switch rapidly from speaking to listening mode) can show they are paying attention to what is being said and participate in the development of the communicative event. Last but not least, in spoken interactions a major role is played by body language, intended as gestures, eye contact, proxemics, etc. Interpreters must take all these different factors into account and use their skills to process them in order to ensure a smooth communication flow.

The construction of meaning in conversations mediated by an interpreter is a very complex process. When a speaker says something, his/her words will be accompanied by some of the nonverbal elements of communication we have listed above. These

elements will be perceived by both the other party (who is the 'final' addressee of the message) and the interpreter (who is the 'temporary' addressee of the message). On the basis of the verbal and nonverbal clues available, and through the "filter" of his/her own cultural background, the interpreter will infer the meaning of the uttered message and rephrase it in the target language in order to make it understandable to the other party. Hence, unlike monolingual encounters, where each intended meaning is processed only twice (in the speaker's wording of the idea and in the listener's perception and interpretation of those words), in interpreter-mediated encounters there are two additional passages, namely the interpreter's inference of meaning and his/her reformulation in the target language.

Through the presentation of a few cases, the following section shows that the complexity of interpreter-mediated encounters should not be underestimated and that the interpreter's mediation, far from being only an element complicating the process of meaning construction, can certainly give a major contribution to communication.

5. Case studies

This paper is part of an ongoing doctoral research project based on a corpus of recordings of real interactions between speakers of English and Italian in the trade fair context. So far the analysis of the corpus seems to show that the interpreter's cultural mediation occurs mainly on two levels, namely the interlocutors' communication styles and the references to culture-specific elements. Through the case studies presented below, we will try to show some examples of cultural mediation.

In this type of interaction, it is reasonable to assume that the main purpose of the encounters, which involve a promoter and a prospective buyer, is to start a business relationship between the two parties. Consequently we may expect the promoter to do his/her best to raise the potential customer's interest in the products and services they have to offer. In the cases discussed below, the specific context is a trade fair on business and incentive travel, in which a great number of references to local culture are introduced by the promoters.

The lines in italics and underlined are an English gloss of the original Italian. The actual translation provided by the interpreter is in the lines marked by *I*. *B* stands for Buyer, and *P* for Promoter. A full transcription key is provided in Appendix I.

5.1 Case 1

1 P Ah! Poi noi possiamo… vabbè, questo poi glielo faccio avere…le faccio avere poi

altre

Ah! Then we can … ok, this I can send you later… I'll let you have more

2 informazioni relativamente anche a delle attività che si possono fare come città sommersa.

information regarding also some activities that can be done with the submerged city.

3 I Ok + also in the area it's possible to have ehm + some + diving

4 B Ok

5 I It's also… there is- there are archaeological remains under the sea

6 B Yeah

In line 2, the promoter refers to some activities related to what she calls simply "città sommersa" (submerged city), which would arguably be quite difficult for her Swedish counterpart to appreciate. The interpreter, who is local, and therefore shares – at least in part – the promoter's "knowledge about the world", realises the message would definitely not produce what she believes to be the desired effect (i.e. raise the buyer's interest) were it to be translated exactly as it is. She decides to make a few additions in her translation, which actually act as key words for the buyer to have a better understanding of the promoter's talk. The phrases "attività" and "città sommersa" (2) – vague if not obscure to the buyer – are clarified through the introduction of "diving" (3) and "archaeological remains" (5) in the English translation. In so doing, the interpreter is actually filling the cultural gap between the parties and avoiding a halt in communication or a loss of interest in the interaction on the part of either.

If we were to use the traditional intercultural perspective as a framework of analysis, we would see the buyer as a representative of the Swedish culture, which E.T. Hall (1989) counts among those he defines as low-context cultures. According to Hall, communication in low-context cultures is explicit and straightforward, and listeners are not expected to contextualise the information received on the basis of previous knowledge. Therefore, in listening to someone talking, they will expect all the necessary information and detail to be carried by the message itself. In this perspective, the Swedish man in our interaction may feel puzzled at the kind of decontextualised information he is receiving, and probably expects the buyer to clarify later on in the conversation.

Independent of his cultural background, however, throughout the conversation the buyer appears as a very quiet and reserved man, especially as compared to the promoter. His approach to communication is very discrete, more oriented to listening

than speaking, also in conformity with his task at the trade show, that is to find out as much information as possible about the products and services on offer.
In both approaches the interpreter's mediation appears to be precious in detecting the potential problems and restoring a certain balance between the communication styles of the two.

5.2 Case 2

1 P Ehm la + tariffe… + sulle: + due e cinquanta per le individuali.
Ehm the + rates… + about two (hundred) and fifty for single rooms.
2 I Due e cinquanta euro…
Two and fifty euros…
3 P Euro.
4 I Two hundred and fifty euros.

In this second case, before translating, the interpreter asks the promoter to specify the currency she is referring to in quoting the rates for hotel rooms. This recording was made in November 2003, that is almost two years after the Euro was introduced in Italy. At the time (and to a lesser extent this is still true today), many people would still often express prices in the old currency, that is the Italian lira. In this particular case, the interpreter cannot tell whether the promoter means 250 Euros or 250,000 Lire and, because the first is about double the second, she wants to make sure she is conveying the meaning really intended by the promoter.
Also in this case, the interpreter's knowledge of a communication feature which is peculiar to a particular country/cultural group helps the parties avoid misunderstandings. Clearly, as an Italian, the interpreter is aware of the potential ambiguity in the promoter's statement and can compensate for this. However, this also shows – even more interestingly – how important it is for interpreters to acquire as much knowledge as possible about their own culture and those they will probably be involved with.

5.3 Case 3

In the exchanges leading up to the following excerpt, the buyer, a Canadian lady, has been trying to arrange a visit to some hotels through the promoter. At the point when the excerpt starts, she is responding to the promoter's suggestion to go and see the hotels some time in the morning. Actually, because she will be busy somewhere else on the proposed morning, the buyer suggests that the tour take place in the afternoon.

1 B Yeah, I wouldn't mind. ++ ehm actually should be later on in the afternoon.
2 I Magari: + primo pomeriggio + invece della mattina?
Perhaps + early afternoon + instead of morning?
3 P Ore 15?
3 p.m.?
4 I 3 o'clock?
5 B Yeah:.
6 I Three o'clock? Yeah?
7 P La signora maGAri si fa trovare alla struttura. + o si fa trovare: nelle vicinanze in maniera tale che
Madam perhaps goes to the hotel + or goes somewhere nearby so that
8 si danno un appuntamento.
they can make an appointment.
9 I Is there any chance you could be: ehm near the- the: struc- the: hotel? To meet this person?

This case offers a number of interesting elements for linguistic analysis. The second clause in line 1, in which the buyer uses the modal *should* to make her suggestion, is translated in a very different way by the interpreter. First of all, the affirmative clause becomes an interrogative, and – even more interestingly – the modal is dropped in favour of a much more open "magari…?", which makes the counter-offer much more negotiable. We may argue that the interpreter has seen a twofold intention in the buyer: on the one hand, she wants to solve her problem (that is, arrange the visit to the hotels *but* at the time she prefers); on the other, she wants to be polite to the promoter, who is doing her a favour. We may wonder why the interpreter has opted for a complete change in the translation rather than for a more literal, and definitely easier, translation. In trying to infer the meaning of the buyer's words, the interpreter could have taken into account some other elements, such as the pause and hesitation preceding the counter-proposal and the definitely accommodating tone of voice (evident in the recording). Also, the previous clause "I wouldn't mind" and the word "actually" seem to act as cushion expressions, as if the buyer wanted to say that she would have been very happy to accept the promoter's suggestion but is really unable to.

A similar process takes place in lines 7-9, where an affirmative clause is again turned into an interrogative. The form the interpreter adopts in this case is impersonal, and

very indirect. In English, indirectness often conveys politeness, and – as in the previous example – the use of the interrogative form makes the request much "softer" than it would be as an affirmative. Also in this case the interpreter has opted for a solution requiring a greater degree of mediation than a more literal translation. The sense of politeness is conveyed, in the promoter's talk, by a number of elements, i.e. the verbose turn of phrase, the formality of the language, the indirect way in which she addresses the buyer ("la signora": line 7) and the stress on the word "magari", which is the only item conveying the idea of a suggestion in an otherwise rather dogmatic statement. Once again, the interpreter has managed to go beyond the words, the visible signs of communication. She has *felt* the general tone of the promoter's words and has chosen what she believes to be the best way to convey the intended meaning in the target language.

6. Final remarks

So far the corpus has shown a great number of elements for the analysis of interpreter-mediated interactions, from both intercultural and linguistic perspectives. It has also shown that interpreters who are linguistically skilled and culturally aware can often play a fundamental role in interlinguistic / intercultural communication, by translating, coordinating and fostering the exchange between the two parties.

Refrence Bibliography

Allwood, J. (1985) English translation of: "*Tvärkulturell kommunikation*" in Allwood, J. (Ed.) *Tvärkulturell kommunikation: Papers in Anthropological Linguistics 12*, University of Göteborg, Department of Linguistics

Angelelli, C. (2000) *Interpretation as a Communicative Event: A Look through Hymes' Lenses*, in Meta, XLV, 4, pp. 580-592

Austin, J.L. (1975), *How to do Things with Words*, Oxford University Press

Bazzanella, C. (1994) *Le facce del parlare*, Firenze, La Nuova Italia

Dahl, Ø (2004) *The Dynamics of Communication*, paper presented at the 11th NIC Symposium, Kristiansand (Norway)

Gentile, A., Ozolins, U. and Vasilakakos, M. (1996) *Liason Interpreting: A Handbook*, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press

Goffman, E. (1981) *Forms of Talk*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press

Hall, E.T. (1990) *The Silent Language*, New York, Anchor Books

Hall, E.T. (1989) *Beyond Culture*, New York, Anchor Books

Hofstede, G. (2001) *Culture's Consequences: Comparing Values, Behaviors, Institutions, and Organisations across Nations*, Thousand Oaks, Sage Publications

Katan, D. (1999) *Translating Cultures: An Introduction for Translators, Interpreters, and Mediators*. Manchester, St. Jerome Publishing

Pistillo, G. (2004), *The Interpreter as Cultural Mediator*, in Allwood J. and Dorriots B. (Eds.), *International Communication at Work, papers from the 10th NIC Symposium on Intercultural Communication*, University of Göteborg, Department of Linguistics

Reynolds, S. & Valentine, D. (2004) *Guide to Cross-Cultural Communication* Upper Saddle River, Pearson – Prentice Hall

Scollon, R. and Wong Scollon, S. (2001) *Intercultural Communication 2nd ed.* Oxford, Blackwell Publishing

Stanton, N. (2004) *Mastering Communication*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan

Trompenaars, F. and Hampden-Turner, C. (1997) *Riding the Waves of Culture: Understanding Cultural Diversity in Business* 2nd ed. London, Nicholas Brealey Publishing

Wadensjö, C. (1998) *Interpreting as Interaction*, London/New York, Longman

Øyvind Økland

Local and global communication patterns among youth in Vennesla, Norway

Abstract

This article looks into how young students in Vennesla High School in Vennesla, Norway use the media and the technology as a part of their local and global communication patterns. It investigates how globalization plays a part in these young high school students' everyday lives, through media practices and communication in general.

The data are analyzed by using a model from the writings of the Swedish anthropologist Ulf Hannerz.

The findings suggest that they are very locally oriented, using the media and available technology to confirm and develop local contacts. They are well travelled and well oriented towards the global world, but to a large extent stick to local and traditional ideas, values and attitudes. The global connections are, however, mostly through the media, and through commercial impulses. In relation to this, they are very selective, and choose what serves their local needs.

Keywords: Cross-cultural communication, media culture, media technology, communication patterns.

A wish to understand what globalization actually is, from a micro-perspective, and how it was manifested in a particular youth culture, made the background for a study of students at Vennesla high school.

The wish to look especially at the communication patterns and the communication reality and their relationship to the global reality, made the background for a study of the students at this school. The project was a part of a Ph D study, to look at how the globalization process influenced attitudes, values and identities. Here I will concentrate on some of the findings, and emphasize the media habits and the communication patterns in general, and how the technology is used here.

Background

The class at Vennesla high school was selected because they were a media class, and also participants in the school's "E-learning project." This meant that they used the media a lot in the education, as well as they were producers of media content. They were not chosen as representative youth, even in Vennesla, but rather because they were supposed to have a good knowledge to new technology, and therefore good possibilities for global contacts.

In addition, Vennesla in itself is a place with its characteristics, also in relation to a study of the local versus the global. The place has about 12,000 inhabitants, and is about 12 miles north of Kristiansand, the regional capital. It is built around industry, and labor movements as well as Christianity have dominated the village (Sørensen 1983). Today, about 65 percent of the labor force is employed in service industries. It was, and still is, very common to go directly from school and into the industry, or to the family farm. The education level is low, and actually only about half of the average for the country and the region as a whole. Only 10 percent has higher education. It is necessary to go elsewhere, at least to Kristiansand, to get a higher education. Therefore, it is possible to see a decrease in the population of people in their twenties, and then it increases again.

The local connection is strong (Stigen 1998), and many moves back after a having studied elsewhere, or worked. The support of traditional values is strong, and the opposition towards negative youth sub-cultures is strong (Haver 1998, 46).

The school willingly participated in the project, and gave good access to the students during school hours, as well as the methods were included in the lessons.

The selected class had 19 students, and the data collection took place with having them write essays and media diaries and conducting semi-structured interviews, as well as observations. A methodological weakness might have been that the collection took

place in school environments, so that they sought to give the "correct" answers, and tried to portray themselves as "global."

Empirical findings

In the following we will look at some of the findings, and I will here concentrate on what was found of actions and habits that could tell anything about global connections, travel habits, media habits, interests, and relations to other cultures.

The media was totally integrated in their lives. The radio met them when they woke up in the morning, and the last thing they did when they went to sleep was to send a good night messages or three on the cell phone. The media were also used parallel to other things, such as driving, doing home work and so on.

Music was an important part of the media habits. The radio was mostly used for the music and MP3- and CD-players were essential parts of their everyday lives. The students expressed an openness to most types of music, even though very few expressed that they liked classical music, and some even expressed that they did not like that kind of music at all. The artists that were most often mentioned, were mostly American or British, and also, naturally, the local artist, Maria Arredondo who is making great success nationally.

As *TV-habits* are concerned, news and debate programs had the highest score. Nearly 60 percent said that they watched such programs daily. Then, soap operas and reality shows. *French Prince of Bel Air* and *Pacific Blue* were mentioned as some of the most popular examples. Reality shows were popular because they got a lot of attention among their friends, and it was important to watch them to be updated.

Tuesday: Watched Big Brother and Temptation Island afterwards. I think it is a stupid program. Watched it only to watch something and I saw Friends of course, on TV2 at 1035 PM.

Wednesday: Watched Hotel Cæsar on TV2 730 pm. I don't think it is especially good but… Big Brother at 830 pm. I am a bit addicted.

Religious programs were seen by many, but more rarely. A part of the research was also to look at what kind of interests they had in their selection of programs, music programs had a high score. News programs were very popular as well, followed by educational programs and sport programs. If the variable only included what

programs one watched often, and rarely, news and debate programs scored highest, followed by music programs, educational programs and film. All these types of programs scored higher than 80 percent.
Not everybody followed the mainstream however. Some took advantage of the possibilities given by the media pluralism, and watched programs others did not watch. A girl thought that she was the only one in class, at least as far as she knew, that watched *The Witch Sabrina* and *The Witches from Warren* on Swedish and Danish TV3.
Even if the data collection took place in the middle of the Iraq war, few sought additional information from *CNN* or *BBC World*.
The most popular national *paper* was *Verdens Gang* (*VG*). It was most often read on the Internet, and was one of the most frequented places when they were online. The local newspaper, Vennesla Tidende, was also extremely popular, almost as popular as the regional newspaper *Fædrelandsvennen*, even though it was only published once a week.
Hollywood-films were very popular, especially action films, thrillers and adventure films. But it was not only Hollywood films that were very popular. Also good Norwegian films had a high score. If they had much media attention, and were known to be quality films, they could reach the same popularity as American films.
It could therefore be either good or well-known American films, such *as Lord of the Rings* and *Catch Me if you Can* that scored highly, or high quality Norwegian films, as for example *Veiviseren*.
A few chose to watch special films, outside the mainstream ones, by becoming members of film clubs and son on.

Communication patterns

In the following, we will look at the more active part of the students' communication patterns, where they either physically move to communicate with others, or if modern technology is contributing to the communication. Travelling patterns and the use of phones and the Internet will be particularly in focus.
The students were well travelled. All of them had been in Denmark and nearly all of them in Sweden, 80 percent in Germany, but less than 20 percent in Finland. The pattern was that they had visited countries that were geographically or culturally close. In average, they had visited 6 countries. Very few of them had been to other

continents or the Third World. Even though a fifth of them had relatives in America, almost none of them had been there.
The trips basically had been vacations with their families, or travels arranged by their school or their churches. The schools often arranged trip to Southern parts of Europe, while the churches took them to Eastern Europe, on aid trips. One had even been to Mongolia on such a mission.
Only very few of them had gone on trips were they came in close contact with the locals, even though many expressed the wish to have closer contact.

When we visited a home for children, we became acquainted with the children there. Nobody there was at my age, they were a bit younger. We exchanged addresses, but I have not got any letters yet, and have not sent either.

The use of *phones* was high, and except for the contact with local and national friends, it was the cell phone, which was most popular. The *home phone* does formal conversations, or longer conversations that would have been very expensive with the cell phone.
Everyone has a *cell phone*. Some just recently got one, but many of them had had one in 5-6 years. The cell phone was among the things they most often mentioned when it came to their highest expenditures. Some tried to compensate for this by buying card with a fixed amount of call time, but they sometimes had to give up this because it was cheaper after all to have an ordinary subscription, because of their high usage.
It was common to send 3-4 messages a day. This was to friends locally, family, or friends nationally.

SMS is used by most youth. I write a couple of messages a day. It is usually with friends I write, but it happens I write to family as well. My siblings and I sometimes send messages to each other. This takes some time, but I do not set aside time for it, but I do it in addition to other activities. In the summer vacations a lot of my friends travel to other places, and then I keep in touch with them in this way. I do not know of anyone living in another country that I have contact with, but when I go abroad, I use to send SMS.

Text messages were used to make appointments for the coming evening, or in the weekend. The cell phone was a very integrated part of their daily lives, and they named it as “my dear Nokia” or “without my cell phone I feel naked.” In this way, it

had first and foremost a social function. In addition it gave security, by knowing that one could be reached, and one could call someone if needed.

The Internet was used in many ways, but it was three ways that was the most important ones. Internet was used for being updated on the news. VGs web page was most often mentioned here. By using the Internet in this way, they could even avoid spending money on the paper version.

Second, it was used for retrieving information, both for personal interests, and school work. An example of this was the search for music idols, pop stars, movie stars and so on. School work was also used as an issue when arguing with parents for getting Internet at home.

A third way to use the Internet was to keep in touch with friends through e-mail and chatting. E-mail was used more if their friends or their family were abroad. Chatting seemed to be a more common way of communicating when trying to keep in touch with friends than it was with relatives. Some used their own dialect from Vennesla when they visited some chat rooms. They could send a text messages to friends to tell them that they were online. In this way a group of friends could meet and chat online. Internet was not to the same extent used to get international contacts, but if it happened, it could have been friends one had met during vacations, and wanted to keep in touch with.

Regarding general communication patterns, it is, naturally, mostly with family and local friends, as well as close adults one communicates with face to face. One also uses text messaging to all of one's local friends, and almost as much to one's family. The close adults, however, get only below 40 percent text messaging, while friends other places nationally have nearly 80 percent contact by text messaging.

Chatting mostly takes place with local friends. Close to 40 percent of the students chatted with local friends, and nearly as many with national friends. One chatted rarely with other adults internationally and even less frequently with adults in Norway.

E-mail was used mostly to local friends, about 70 percent, and then national friends. International friends were also contacted on a regular basis by about 60 percent of the students, but the other adults internationally and nationally were more often contacted by e-mail than their own families (about 25 percent). Close adults was the group that most rarely were contacted by e-mail. The phone and text messaging were the preferred way of communicating here.

Traditional letters were a much less popular way of communicating then e-mail and text messaging, but still not at all out-dated. National friends were those who most frequently were contacted by ordinary letters, almost 40 percent. Then their

international friends followed, local friends (almost 20 percent), other adults nationally (12 percent), other adults internationally (10 percent), close adults (about 5 percent), and family was here last with only a few percent.
By comparing the findings with findings from other places, one can see, perhaps not so surprisingly, that the Vennesla youth is not that very much different from youth elsewhere, at least in the Nordic countries (Norsk Mediebarometer 2003a; Hareide 2002, Pedersen 2004, Puijk 2004, Rossow 2002, 93, Stald 2000, 19, Tufte 2002, 248, Livingstone 2002, 13; 2003, 151, Brown 2000, 37, Nordli 1999; Ling 2001, Drotner 1999, Sjøberg 1999).

Globalization among youth in Vennesla

What do the findings then imply for the impact and status of globalization among young high school students in Vennesla? The following question will be answered by using some of the concepts from Ulf Hannerz. He uses the four concepts of *forms of life*, *the state*, *the market* and *the movement* to explain different aspects of culture (1992). *Forms of life* is the everyday life, where things are done repeatedly and a micro-level. *The state* is the state apparatus, having an agenda and policy it seeks to implement on its citizens. The market is the arena for buying and selling commodities and the movement could be religious or humanitarian ideas that are sought to be spread.
The *forms of life* or the everyday life of the students was very much centered on their school and school work, their friends, leisure activities and nurturing their social life. The technology played a very important part in this, as especially the cell phone was the most important way of communicating with friends and family. The Internet and its chat functions were used for this purpose, since a lot of the communication with friends, even locally, was done through chat, sometimes by writing in their own dialect. It seemed to be a solution for them in a hectic life to keep in touch in this way, especially during the week, while in the weekends they met physically on their different activities. The *forms of life* arena as it is today could not function without the technology provided for by the global market.
"My Nokia" and the Internet were fully integrated parts of their daily lives, and they could hardly have done without that kind of technology. In this arena the cultural flows were symmetrical, sometimes in a face-to-face situation, but quite as often through the technology. The technology made it possible for them to extend their communication despite time constraints, and despite the space constraints.

Technology enabled them to communicate with family and friends very cheap and frequently through e-mail, chat and cell phones, although they were in different parts of the world. When they had family or friends in these situations the technology was most frequently used for communication across the globe.
Likewise, their media consumption, such as TV and listening to music, was a very important part of their daily life. Here they mainly were exposed to an asymmetrical form of communication, receiving information most often from distant senders. Through the different media, they came in contact with the *market*. Through the different commercials that they were exposed to, mostly on TV, they got information about market
It was not so attractive to adapt to different life styles, or other cultural or religious expressions. In fact, some expressed a fear that they could adapt to cultural expressions that they did not approve of:

I feel that we in the world today are not being more closely connected to a center, but are connected more and more strongly to USA, that the center is there, and my opinion is that the politics and the morality of USA is totally gone astray in many cases, and it is dangerous to approach their society and adapt to them, because they are very centered around their own culture, their own society and their view of things, that it is they who have the power in the world. It can be a bit dangerous too, we can become blind and be led astray too, and for example when it comes to pornography, alcohol, and the free way of life so to speak. The morality and the ethics are disappearing, and I feel it has done that very much in USA, not in the whole of USA, but at least how we see it on TV, although that picture is not always true, but that is how we see it, and how we adopt what we see, in the media. (Hanne)

The *form of life* level for the students is a constant reciprocal flow of meaning that has to do with education, family life, and leisure activities and so on. These activities are done over and over again, and giving it what Hannerz calls "a measure of redundancy" (1992, 47). It functions to stabilize cultural processes, and also has a tendency towards boredom. Although they are very fond of their home place, this gives them a wish to travel, to see other places, and take their education elsewhere. After that most of them want to return back to Vennesla.
The *market* was at the same time a very important part of their *forms of life*. Without the knowledge about films, TV programs, and latest fashions, they would not have been able to socialize with their friends. Commodities, such as films, music, cars and

clothes were all part of creating their identities. Through their clothing styles, they showed that the global influences through marketing had strong impact on them. They tended to under-emphasize the fact that they were very influenced by this, but admitted the similarities with their own clothing style and for example the youth from Palestine who visited them. Here the cultural flow was an asymmetrical one, mostly from the USA, Great Britain, Japan, and other places with a high production of cultural commodities for the global market. There were also examples of the opposite, such as exporting a local singer to the national market, and possibly later on also to the global market. This singer, however, was a product of the global market herself, as she was not exporting any local song tradition, but a pop tradition well known to a global audience.

The market level was not only an exchange of goods. It was also an exchange of information, knowledge and emotional exchanges. Through the Internet they were able to retrieve, or exchange information and knowledge. And most importantly, the exchange of goods carried meanings and was also an exchange of signs. Buying a new cell phone was not just a cell phone, but it was "my Nokia" as one of the girls put it, or the clothes had to be *Vera Moda* as another girl stated. As opposed to the *forms of life* framework which is characterized by stability, the *market* framework is characterized by instability. The students would often change their tastes in clothes, pop stars, as well as churches, as one girl stated: "I belong to the state church, but I usually walk around a bit to the others as well".

The *state* framework, in seeking towards homogenization, has not the same possibilities to do this through the media as it had before. A little more than a decade ago, it was basically one national TV channel. Now the channels are numerous. The choices the students make are also very varied and individualized. "I am watching *Fame Factory* at *TV3*. Of all the friends I know, I am the only one watching this," one girl said in the interview.

Still there were strong homogenizing forces in their upbringing. Basically, these students seemed to come from stable environments, and had, broadly speaking, rather traditional and similar values and attitudes.

The media as well had strong homogenizing elements. A show like *Torsdagsklubben* was watched by many of the students, not only because of the good entertainment, but also because they knew that their friends were watching it. In addition, the entertainment was about news and issues that had been covered in the media last week. Sports events during the winter had the same effect. Most of them liked to see Norwegians win in the winter sports.

Other examples from the data that showed strong community feelings with the rest of the nation, was their pride of being Norwegians. One student cites the former Norwegian Prime Minister, Gro Harlem Brundtland, in her now famous expression from the Lillehammer Olympics: "it is typically Norwegian to be good." This student was only around eight years old when she said it, but the expression is now a part of the Norwegian vocabulary. The flows of meaning from the center and outward are therefore still there, although they are much more fragmented and individualized than before.

The *movement*, understood as religious ideas and ideologies and so on, in the same way as the *market*, connected the students to the global world. They were strongly involved in a dialogue project between their school, and a sister school in Hebron, Palestine. One might say that this was an extension of the general peace movement that Norway, according to several students, played an active part in. They mentioned it as one of the typical features of being Norwegian, because Norwegians were peace lovers and peacekeepers.

The environmental movement was another global movement many students identified themselves with. Although few of them were actively involved, they had strong sympathies, and were involved at least on a more limited basis, as for example single issues related to animal protection, and also political campaigns, such as "Rush against Bush" which was a protest movement against Bush's policy in the Middle East.

The aid trips to Eastern Europe was another example of such movements that they took part in. Except for such trips, their church involvement was not very globally oriented. They had made few global contacts, with missionaries or other people on the respective mission fields of their churches.

Few of them had links globally to other non-religious groups, such as environmental groups or other feminist movements. In this arena it seemed therefore to be mostly an asymmetrical flow, from Vennesla to rest of the world.

They did not adapt to many cultural flows from the global supermarket. They could "shop" within the different offers that existed in Vennesla, and within the Christian religion, but other than that, they had a deep anchor in their local and religious identity.

The students in the research were truly a part of the *global ecumene*, but it was more the *market* and partly the *movement* that linked them to the global culture. And here they definitely were shopping on the global supermarket.

They used the technology that was available, to chat, to create online games, to talk with their friends in the neighborhood as well as globally, but it was always based on

their own defined needs, and from there they went shopping. It also varied quite a lot to what degree they were shopping, and to what degree they were linked to the cultural supermarket. But being able to receive cultural flows from outside, such as popular music, Hollywood films and so on does not make the youth in Vennesla Americanized or globalized.

Following the definitions of Mathews (2000) where he divides culture in two categories, as shaped by the *state* and as shaped by the *market*, the Vennesla culture is the traditional one. The *creole* part of the culture is made by the encounter with the global supermarket. The basis and the fundamental part of the culture are still the Vennesla culture, and the Vennesla identity, but through the media and the market, the *creole* element is also very visible. Other studies will have to look into the degree that this *creole* element is playing on the culture. A hypothesis would be that it is more pre-dominant in bigger places, and in cities like Oslo, since the mobility there is bigger, and we have a *double creolizing*, with both immigration and more people who travel (Hannerz 1996).

Conclusion

It is not the task here to say something about youth culture between the local and the global in general. Compared to other studies, it looks like there are many similarities though, between Vennesla youth and other youth.

Even though youth share a common global popular culture, and share most of the common commodities that are available on the global market, it is too far-fetched to claim that there is a common global youth culture, if culture is understood as a whole, with shared ideas, values, and attitudes. It is rather the global impulses that are actively interpreted in relation to the local culture and frames of reference, as Nayak puts it,

young people are not the passive recipients of social transformations, as may have been assumed, but are responding to change in a variety of ways that draw upon the signs, symbols and motifs made available at local, national and international scales. (Nayak 2003, 167)

The media and technology are used according to local needs. It is therefore not necessarily a consequence of global media and global technology that we get a global village, becoming more and more alike.

The technology has to be adapted in accordance with local needs, in order to be viewed as meaningful (Thompson 1995; Økland 2001).

The global reality is therefore a natural part of the youth's reality, and despite communication and influence from the global, consciously or unconsciously, they are first and foremost well anchored in the local, and let the global play a part where it suits the local needs.

Reference list

Barnet, Richard, and John Cavanaugh. 1994. *Global dreams: Imperial corporations and the new world order*. New York: Touchstone.

Hannerz, Ulf. 1992. *Cultural complexity*. New York: Columbia University.

Hareide, Janne Grjotheim. 2002. *Txt back!: En kvalitativ studie av ungdommers bruk av mobiltelefon.* M.A. thesis in sociology, Oslo: University of Oslo.

Ling, R. 2001. Adolescent girls and young adult men: Two sub-cultures of the mobile telephone. *Telenor FoU rapport 34/2001*. Telenor: Kjeller.

Livingstone, Sonia. 2002. *Children's use of the Internet: A review of research literature.* London: Media@lse, London School of Economics and Political Science.

_____. 2003. *Children's use of the Internet: Reflections on the emerging research agenda.* New Media & Society. London: Sage.

Nayak, Anoop. 2003.*Race, place and globalization: Youth cultures in a changing world*. Oxford: Berg.

Nordli, H. 1999. Fra 'Spice girls' til 'cyber girls:' datafascinerte jenter i ungdomsskolen. *Oppvekst og IKT. Konferanserapport: Generasjon-n 1999*. Informasjonsserien nr. 8/1999. Lillehammer: Høgskolen i Lillehammer.

Norsk Mediebarometer. 2003a. *Fjernsyn*. Accessed 20 May 2004. Available at http://www.ssb.no/medie/sa63/fjernsyn.pdf; internet.

Pedersen, Willy. 2004. Mobilbruk, chat og sex blant norske tenåringer. *Tidsskrift for den norske lægeforening* 124, 13-14: 1756-1759.

Puijk, Roel. 2004. Globale medier, lokal bruk: Ungdom og spredning av mobil og internet. *Norsk medietidsskrift 11*, no. 3: 257-277.

Rossow, I. 2003. Ungdommen nå til dags – tall fra "Ung i Norge 2002." *Tidsskrift for ungdomsforskning* 1, no. 3: 89-97.

Sjøberg, U. 1999. Att leva I Cyberspace: En studie om hur yngre svenska tonåringar använder och upplever Internet. In *Børn, unge og medier,* ed. C. Lykke. Nordiske forskingsperspektiver. Gøteborg: Nordicom.

Stald, Gitte. 2000. Telefonitis: Unge danskeres brug af telefonen i IT-tidsalderen. In *Mediekultur* (Aug): 4-22. Aarhus: MedieKultur.

_____. 2001a. Outlook and insight: Young Dane's uses of the Internet, navigating global seas and local waters. *Working paper No. 7.* Copenhagen: University of Copenhagen.

_____. 2001b. Søger net: Chat, neværk, unge. *Uddannelse* 10: 31-39.

Statistisk Sentralbyrå. 2004. Accessed 2 February 2004. Available from http://www.ssb.no; internet.

Stigen, Ole Trygve. 1998. *Å bli voksen: To mønstre. En studie av overgangen til voksenlivet med vekt på utflyttingen fra foreldrehjemmet, for unge fra Vennesla kommune.* M.A. thesis in sociology. University of Oslo.

Sørensen, Bjørg Aase. 1983. *Arbeiderbevegelsen og industribygda. Industrien som levevei, local arbedierbevegelse som samfunnsformer.* Ph D thesis. University of Bergen.

Thompson, John. 1995. *The media and modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Tufte, Thomas. 2002. Ethnic minority Danes between diaspora and locality: Social uses of mobile phones and Internet. In *Global encounters: Media and cultural Transformation*, ed. Gitte Stald and Thomas Tufte, 253-263. Luton: University of Luton.

Arne Olav Øyhus

Subjects as Objects - Development Research as Intercultural Communication

Methodological problems and ethical dilemmas in conducting research in native and alien settings

Paper presented at the 11th Conference of the Nordic Network for Intercultural Communication, 26 - 28 November 2004 - Kristiansand, Norway

Introduction

Within the social sciences human beings are the objects of study. What typifies these objects is that they are simultaneously thinking subjects with their own ideas, beliefs and behaviours. That man is thus both an object of knowledge and a subject that knows[9] has a particular implication for performing social studies in the sense that the researcher directly or indirectly, consciously or unconsciously, communicates with his/her research object. The relationship between the social scientist and the objects of research is therefore of a qualitatively other nature than that between a natural scientist's and his objects of study.

Whereas the natural scientist may, rather correctly, assume that his observations will not influence the objects' behaviour, the social scientist's communication with his study objects will more or less automatically turn them into subjects. Consequently, the social scientist must be aware of the fact that he/she may influence the behaviour of the objects, and that he/she will most possibly be influenced by the objects of study. We may hence argue that social research is a two-way communication process between the researcher and the researched. This two-sidedness will be particularly strong when using a qualitative, or participatory approach.

[9] Foucault, M., 1973*: The Order of Things*, New York, Pantheon

The communication process between researcher and researched is commonly signified by an important aspect, namely that it is intercultural, or – alternatively – intersubcultural. Intercultural, when the researcher conducts research in alien settings; intersubcultural when the researcher conducts research in a native setting, but in settings or among groups (subcultures) to which he/she is not a regular member. Which is most often the case. Quite naturally, the intercultural aspect of communication is substantially accentuated and more explicit the greater the distance is between the researcher and the researched's cultures and cosmologies.

The difference between performing research in a native and an alien setting raises at least two important theoretical issues; one methodological, the other ethical.

On the methodological side, the key issue to address is how variations in research settings affect the content of the communication process, and hence also the interculturality between the researcher and his/her objects of study?

On the ethical side, we must acknowledge that modern social studies, as modern science in general, are Western inventions (and interventions).[10] Whereas Western people are somehow knowledgeable about the role of science, and the importance of scientific findings, even to the degree that a lot of scientific knowledge has become more or less common knowledge, the situation is quite often the opposite in the non-industrialised of the world. Among, for instance, ordinary Africans, science is not at all a part of their everyday life, and scientific findings are a typical unknown field of knowledge. As traditional beliefs are still the order of the day, and modern science is a *terra incognita* for the masses of people from the non-industrialised world, the communication between the researcher and the researched is typified by a process where one partner, the researched, does not know much about what the other partner, the researcher, is doing. Consequently, as the former has a limited influence on what the latter is doing, why he is doing it, and how he is doing it, the former can not protect himself. This leaves a lot of responsibility on the researcher, because at the same time as he studies his objects to collect crucial information, he must also protect his object from any harm that the research findings can possibly bring upon her. The researched is at the mercy of the researcher. This *is* an ethical dilemma.

[10] Ricoeur, P., 1965: *History and Truth*, Evanston, Northwestern University Press
Mudimbe, V.Y., 1988: *The Invention of Africa. Gnosis, Philosophy and the Order of Knowledge*, London, James Currey.

An important issue that follows from this is to what degree the researcher is conscious about their respondents' situation, and to which extent it is put into consideration. The ethical foundation of the social sciences is not very profound, and ethics is not always an important element in the training of social scientist. While, for instance, medical researchers have a rather well defined framework of ethics defining their obligation to seek the good and benefit their research objects, and a duty to refrain anything that could harm them, we do rarely find the same explicit ethical rules in the social sciences.

The ethical dilemma of the social sciences is all the more accentuated by the fact that whereas the benefits of research for the researcher can be rather explicitly calculated in number of publications, salary, academic degrees and scientific prestige, it is much more difficult to calculate the benefits of the research for the objects of research. This issue is serious, because at the same time as the research objects are the focus of the research, they are also the actual owners of the information that the researcher so heavily depend upon. In the discourse on biodiversity, it seems to be a general accepted principle – at least rhetorically – that the local ownership to biological genes must be recognised, and rewarded. But what then about the local ownership to the cultural genes – information? Is it correct to state that social studies, and in particular development studies, do not only imply an asymmetrical communication process, but also an asymmetrical reward system?

Using a comparative perspective, I will use this paper as an opportunity to shed light on methodological problems and ethical issues related to doing development research in native and alien settings.

Doing development research at home

In the period 1976-77, I conducted a study on a small island on the western coast of Norway for my Master's thesis in Social Anthropology.[11] Applying a development perspective, I analysed the social, economic and cultural changes that had taken place in the local community during the last hundred years. The objects of my research were

[11] Øyhus, A.O., 1979: *Ertvågsøya: Et eksempel på markedsintegrasjon og sosial endring i et norsk kystdistrikt*. Hovedfagsoppgave ved Institutt for sosialantropologi, Universitetet i Oslo.

local households and their management of natural resources, or more concretely, how local households performed the economic activities connected to fishing and farming.

While doing my study, I learnt that doing research, even in a native setting, was a much more complicated and different task than what I had expected. This was related to an important discovery that I made as the research process went along, namely that doing research in a local community is very much a two-sided, communication process - at the same time as I was studying them, they were "studying" me. As I was observing their activities, and asking them various questions in order to understand them, they watched my behaviour and my activities, asking me various questions in order to understand me. They were, in particular, interested in finding out the deeper (secret) goals and hidden motives behind my interest for them.

Rather early in the research process, I became aware of the fact that I was perceived, interpreted, and even "judged", by two overarching and interlocking statuses, both making the locals rather prejudiced towards me – I was an urbanite, and I was an intellectual.

The status as an urbanite was connected to me as a person coming from Oslo, the capital, the metropolis with theatres, cinemas, fancy restaurants, universities, celebrities (politicians and actors, royalties, etc, etc). These were institutions and persons that local people only knew from a far distance, and with which and whom they felt both insecure and unfamiliar, but, at the same time - at least secretly - admired. Believing that I, to some degree, was one of them, the others, made many locals feel a bit inferior and somehow even a bit jealous. They were pretty sure that I, due to my superior standing, "looked down" on them.

I should add here that this perception held among many local people, is connected to an urban/rural dichotomy which is not uncommon in Norway, and which was even much more pronounced thirty years ago. Generally, rural people distrusted urban people, based on a rather strong belief that the urbanites, especially people from Oslo and the surrounding area are prejudiced towards people from the small, local rural communities. It was, and to some extent, still is a strong sentiment among many rural people that the "high brow" urban people have low thoughts about rural people, considering them to be ignorant, simple, uneducated, and backward. This belief, of course, makes rural people sceptical towards people with an urban background.

This is not strange. You find the same ideas in most parts of the world. What is may be a bit strange is that this stereotypical belief or attitude toward people from the Oslo area is not only found among typical rural people. During my working carrier I have had the chance to work in the two regional capitals of Kristiansand, in the far south, and Tromsø, in the far north. In both places have I several times experienced that local people categorise people from the Oslo district as "high browers" or “high society people” with high thoughts about themselves, believing that they think about themselves as sophisticated, educated, and knowledgeable. In Kristiansand, even among educated people, you easily discover that "østlending" (eastlander) is a social category associated with a lot of negative features, quite often recognised as a rich summer tourist with an exclusive cabin in a fashionable area. In Tromsø, this may even go further as "søringer" (southerners) is a most despicable social categories.

The second status, which absolutely accentuated the social and cultural distance between me and the local community, and substantially enhanced their scepticism and prejudice towards me, was connected to my academic background. I was a student, an intellectual, who had come there, to their home community, to study them. Why? What was it there for me to study? What was my purpose? What was so interesting or special about them that it was worth a study?

When I told them that I wanted to study their way of life, their culture, their responses told me that they were not at all convinced: What way of life? What do you mean by culture? Do we have a particular culture? Can't you just see that we live as we live! We fish, we farm, we are sailors, shop-clerks, ship-builders! Is it something strange about that? Isn't this a “natural” way of making a living? They were rather certain that I had a hidden agenda.

Although communicating to the best of my ability my purpose for being there, why I wanted to study them, what my research could be used for, some people did not want to become my informants because they were too sceptical, or right out negative.

Even after living there for almost one and a half year - working in the local grocery store, as a turn-boy on the local diary truck, planting tree seedlings in the forest, fishing, playing football, attending parties at the "youth house" (Ungdomshuset), and drinking "karsk" (moonshine) together with the local boys – I did not manage to

communicate my project in a manner that won their full confidence. Many, may be even the majority, accepted my presence. But it was very much in the same way as they accepted the uncomfortable presence of the new priest, the new teacher or the new policeman.

To summarise, it is obvious that I never managed to convince the islanders about what value and importance my research could have *for them*. While some, especially the more "cultural" ones, looked upon my research as somehow interesting and possibly beneficent, documenting for eternity a vanishing way of life, others looked upon me as a snooper who was there, interesting only in their moon shining business, sexual secrets, or other obscure affairs, useful only for my own purposes. The inter-subcultural factor created an obstacle to the communication process between me and them, and was as such a barrier to my study.

Doing developing research far away

Quite interestingly, very rarely have I faced the same methodological problems when I have done studies in Africa or in Asia. Quite often the opposite has often been the case. Instead of being sceptical, my feeling has been that people have been open and trustful to me. At several occasions local people have been so confident that they have given me more and deeper information than I really was asking for. Sometimes even to the extent that they have revealed "secrets" that were not at all meant for my eyes and ears.

About seven years after completing my Norwegian study, I got my first opportunity to do "proper" development research in Africa, as I was employed in a development project in Southern Sudan for about three years. During this period I was performing a rather comprehensive baseline study in eight different ethnic groups.

For about one year, I was living among the Toposa, a pastoral, nomadic tribe. I was particularly interested in studying how they managed the natural resources connected to the cattle sphere.[12]

[12] Øyhus, A.O., 2001: The Innocent Developer: Ethics and Ox-Cultivation. A Case Study from Southern Sudan, *Forum for Development Studies*, Vol. 2, 2000 (pp. 235-271).

During my study in Toposa, I was invited to several communal rituals and ceremonies. Besides being both happy and grateful for these invitations, I was also a bit astonished, as I had heard so much about these important, but highly ”secretive” events. As a matter of fact, I knew that regarding many of these rituals, only initiated men were allowed to participate. What puzzled me even more was that I was not the only outsider who was invited. The invitations also included my female colleagues. How could this be explained, as it was completely forbidden for Toposa women even to be close to the sites to some of these "holy" events?

When I raised the issue with some of my Toposa friends and colleagues, I was then taught an important lesson: from their point of view neither our cultural background, nor our age, nor our sex mattered at such tribal events, because as outsiders we were anyway completely alien to the system. We were existing totally outside the Toposa world or cosmology (*nyepite kangitoposa*), and as such we did not have any impact on the rituals, the ancestors, or god in any – for the Toposa – perceivable manner. According to my interpretation, our overarching status as outsiders, aliens, non-belongers, meant that our statuses connected to ethnicity, age or sex were of no concern, no relevance at all. As we were not of the same people (or any of the neighbouring people that Toposa knew, and were in war with), as we did not share the same culture code or language (or any other culture code or language that the Toposa knew), we lived in separate worlds. In all matter of fact, we were completely irrelevant to the event. In this respect, we were, so to speak, non-existent.

In this situation, a couple of fundamental methodological question emerged in my mind: First, how can it be explained that an outsider, an alien, can be irrelevant to a social situation, even when participating as a researcher? Second, why is it that a complete alien, stranger, outsider, can sometimes relatively easy get access to "hidden" information? Were we, the outsiders, so alien and irrelevant to the Toposa that they did not even see us as partners in a communication process? Were the events that I, as a researcher, interpreted as intercultural communication processes, for the Toposa a neutral, non-communicating event? Were we there, just as the heavenly bodies were on the sky above us - you notice them, but you do not see that they have any relevance for the activities that take place?

Comparison

Comparison is a well-known methodological tool among anthropologists for trying to make generalisations. So, let me now try to compare my native and alien experiences to analyse the following generalisation: At "home", i.e. in a native setting, a researcher may experience scepticism and prejudice on the side of the respondents because here the researcher, due to a *likeness and closeness* to the respondents, is considered to be relevant, i.e. a partner in a communication process where each side is aware of the fact that they send, receive and interprets each others messages. The respondents know that the researcher is after something, and as they know that research can have an impact, they are not always willing to expose information which they know that can be used "against" them.

In alien settings a researcher may experience openness and confidence on the side of the respondents due to the fact that *remoteness and difference* between the two makes the researcher irrelevant, i.e. one partner does not perceive the other as a partner, as participating in a communication process. Therefore, there are no reason for the research objects to hide information, or have a sceptical attitude towards the researcher. This will typically be the case in settings where the respondents are members of a community where science is generally absent.

The Ethical Dilemma

Although interesting, I have never tested this hypothesis. What has interested me more is the ethical dilemma connected to the openness you, as a researcher may encounter in communication with people far away from home. I now want to proceed along this line.

To collect information from respondents in alien settings and convert this into reports, books and papers has been my job for about twenty-five years. The main tool for this endeavour has been some kind of participatory approaches, based on communication. Basically, my job has been completely dependent on establishing and maintaining communication processes with local people, so that I can receive the information I need. I have used information from peasants in Tigray and fish mongers along Lake Victoria to write articles that have promoted my work, which again has forwarded my carrier. I have used information from Didinga chiefs and elders to obtain myself a

Ph.D.[13] Thanks to the poor people of Africa, I have earned my self a seat as a Professor at a small university in Norway.

Not only for me, but for the entire international group of development researchers, the openness and confidence we meet when we communicate with people far way from home is an asset which not only makes it tolerable to conduct such studies - it is basically a necessary condition exactly because we operate in alien settings. But, as already argued, using this asset brings to the forefront the question of research ethics.

From the field of research ethics we can, at least tentatively, state the following ethical dilemma: With what rights, justification and fairness can we, as outsiders, exploit the information we receive with such a high degree of openness and confidence, and use it for our own purposes without a mutual obligation that it will also be used for something that is beneficial for them, the local people? We utilise our position as researchers to get access to resources (information) owned by others, without guaranteeing any reciprocity at all. Is it morally defendable to argue that our research might have some beneficial consequences for the local people in the long run? And what if our research implies some harmful effects to the others, however non-intentional?

To specify some content of the ethical dilemma, let me mention one example. As a part of a university collaboration between AUC and Mzumbe University in Tanzania, I have interviewed local entrepreneurs several places in Tanzania about their businesses. One set of questions that I have asked the respondents about, regards how their businesses are affected by bribery, corruption or ill-functioning public officials.[14]

To my surprise, and relief, all the local entrepreneurs who I have interviewed have been more than eager to respond to these questions.

---

[13] Øyhus, A.O., 1992: Adaptivity and Rationality: The Didinga Ethno-Agrarian Mode of Adaptation, *Doctor Scientarium Theses* 1992: 19, Agricultural University of Norway.

[14] Øyhus, A.O., 1999: The Importance of Initial Motivation for the Entrepreneurial Process. Paper presented at The 3rd Annual International Conference on African Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development (ICAESB): "Challenges and prospects of SMEs in Africa in the 3rd millenium". White Sands Hotel, Dar es Salaam from 28-29 September 1999.

Øyhus, A.O., 2003: The Entrepreneurial Self-Image: Lonely Rider or Social Team Player. Comparing Entrepreneurs in Tanzania and Indonesia. *Journal of Entrepreneurship*, No. 12, Vol. 2, 2003.

A case from Bagamoya, Tanzania

Now, let us, in this regard, have a look at a typical research setting. A white researcher, a *mzungu*, turns up outside a small workshop in Bagamoyo in a Landcruiser. The researcher's ambition is to interview a local tailor. What the tailor faces is a stranger, a mzungu, who is entering his shop, and asking if he can pose some questions. The tailor, not knowing at all why the mzungu wants to ask questions, and what questions will be all about, is – by duty to his culture - kind, gentle, hospitable, and positive. In addition, any mzungu is a rich and influential person, and it might be something that can be gained for the respondent from this encounter.

The appearance of the stranger quickly attracts a crowd of by-passers who want to see what is taking place. Consequently, during the interview, not only the researcher and the respondent are sitting on the small terrace facing the street, but also the employees, and a crowd of curious by-passers. Fearing the validity and reliability of the respondent's answer in this situation, what is the researcher going to do? He has no right, no authority, to not ask the others to leave. And when then the researcher asks the respondent if he can ask him some personal questions, the respondent smiles friendly, and tell the researcher just to go ahead.

How can this relaxed attitude on the side of the respondent be explained? May be certain cultural factors, such as the following are relevant:

First of all, the respondent is suddenly the centrepiece in a performance which he certainly does not find unattractive.

Secondly, it is not according to "African" culture neither to ask the mzungu nor your neighbours to leave the place.

Thirdly, if the respondent did ask people to go away, it would possibly mean that he had something to hide. In this social environment, that would certainly not be very conducive for him.

Fourthly, most sites in Africa, for instance a person's private garden, is not very private compared to a European interpretation of the concept. People are accustomed to the fact that family matters, and other social affairs, even trials, are taking place in the open.

After accepting these facts, the researcher starts to ask him about his business. These questions can be relatively neutral in content. Then the researcher follows up by asking more "sensitive" questions, for instance about corruption and bribery. The tailor

continuous to speak as freely as before, explaining the fact that corruption ” is a must”. Going into details, he tells the researcher that if he wants to have a business license, he has to go to this and that office, and bribe this and that official. If he wants to open a bank account, he has to go to this and that manager and bribe him.

All the time, the by-sitters are listening, nodding or shaking their heads, adding some comments, whispering with each other, whistling quietly, clicking their tongues, and so on and so forth.

Never does it seem to bother him, the respondent, that this – in a judicial sense - is sensitive information. That he is directly accusing identifiable people, more or less by name, for bribery and corruption. It appears that the respondent has no idea that the results from this communication process could have any consequences for him. Mainly, I believe, because he can not see what the information he has given can be used for. What we see here is a communication process where one partner has the full grasp of what is taking place, while the other does not know what this is all about.

The Quest for Anonymity

What about anonymity? In an African context this is generally a non-issue, possibly because it is not a recognised concept. (I am pretty sure that the concept does not exist in the kiswahili language). Even many of my African colleagues have problems to relate much importance to it. After having undertaken interviews together with my African colleagues, I have suggested that we should use fictive name for our respondents, especially if they have given us sensitive information. Rarely, if ever have any of my colleagues reacted positively to this suggestion. They see no need for it. Before starting an interview I have, as a rule, never been asked by my respondents that they must be treated anonymously, and that the information they give must be handled confidentially. I believe that this can be attributed to two facts: The respondent can not possibly understand what the information can be used for, and, secondly, he believes that what he knows, everybody knows. He has no understanding of the fact that published in a report, his information would be incriminating, and that it could, if the right persons got hold of it, bring him to jail. For even though bribery and corruption is heavily embedded and integrated into the Tanzanian political, judicial, and economic system, it is still illegal. As a general fact, such a respondent can therefore not protect himself. That is, hence, up to the researcher to do.

Status and role

What we thus have to be aware of in an African communication context is that a combination of several intertwining factors or dimensions are at stake which can be attributed to a general lack of knowledge about science and scientific work among local respondents.

We might connect this to the concepts of status and role, and again approach the question of the ethical dilemma. In Africa, "researcher" is not a known and recognised status, it is, in general, irrelevant. For most ordinary people, research is neither something good nor something bad, it is neither rewarding nor dangerous, it is rather non-existing. This can also be stated a bit differently: in an interview setting, your status as a researcher is completely overshadowed by another status, that of a mzungu.

In any communication process between you, as a researcher, and local people, for instance your potential respondents, they never see a researcher; they always see a mzungu. And what do they know about mzungus? That their most important role is being a donor. A mzungu is synonymous with someone who is rich, who has resources, who can, potentially, supply you with something that you want and need. Thinking, of course, instrumentally and strategically, the respondents will answer a mzungu's questions because they hope and expect to get something from it. Why shouldn't they? It is a big chance that they do not know what research can be used for, but they certainly know what a donation can be used for.

An interview situation like this could be looked upon as a kind of transaction as, at least hypothetically, a mutual, reciprocal exchange of resources between the researcher and the respondent is taking place. Seen from the perspective of the respondent, the communication setting is potentially mutual because you, as a respondent, give him, the mzungu, the resources he is asking for, namely information. In return you hope to receive some benefits from him for yourself, for your family, or may be for your community.

From the perspective of the researcher, you receive resources, i.e. information, that you are in much need of. In return you have some hope, or most possibly even the good intention, that your research is a resource that will bring him, the respondent, his family, or his community, some benefits, for instance development, in the future.

Although ethically pleasant, and boosting the moral of the researcher, however, the whole situation can hardly hide the asymmetrical character of the hypothetical resource exchange. The researcher, at the head of the situation, knows more or less accurately what he will receive from the communication, the respondents most often have unrealistic, futile hopes.

Where do we stand, and what can we learn from others?

In a Norwegian scientific context, ethical issues connected to research in the social sciences is not absent. There exists a National Committee for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences and the Humanities (NESH) that was established in 1990. Its terms of reference included drawing up ethical guidelines for research ethics in the social sciences, law and the humanities. In 1993, NESH adopted a first version of the guidelines. The present set of guidelines was adopted by NESH in 1999.[15] Regarding ethical issues connected to research in development countries, NESH arranged a seminar in 1997 concerning the matter.[16] This seminar made no conclusion, recommendations nor guidelines.

The NESH ethical guidelines cover all the most important ethical topics (i.e. meet the obligation of truth, keep up scholarly standards, the need for freedom of research, the obligation to respect human dignity, the obligation to prevent injury and pain, the obligation to obtain consent, the obligation to report research back to subjects, etc., etc). The weakness is thus not their content, but their lack of recognition, functioning and impact. Generally, the guidelines are neither well-known nor much discussed in the research community. Consequently, the researchers do not take them very much into consideration. A practical result of this is that The Norwegian Research Council (NFR), the strongest contributor to research in Norway, does rarely use these guidelines when screening applications. More significantly perhaps, ethical issues are not an item in their application forms. The NESH's lack of impact and importance may be related to its mandate, stipulating that its role is to give advice and issue statements on questions of principle. The committee has no judicial function in

[15] NESH, 2001: *Guidelines for research in ethics in the social sciences, law and humanities* (URL: http://etikkom.no/NESH/guidelines.htm.
[16] NESH, 1997: Etiske spørsmål ved forskning i U-land (URL: http://www. Etikkom.nmo/NESH/uland.htm.

relation to breaches of guidelines, and it has no powers to impose sanctions. May be the best we can say about the NESH guidelines is that while their intentions are good, their effect is minor or factually absent regarding research in the social sciences. This being so basically because they do not *govern* research activities.

The governing principle of research ethics seem to be stronger in other disciplines and in other settings. Researchers in the biomedical sciences have for centuries had a rather well defined framework of ethics based on the Hippocratic tradition, governing the research activities. The basic tenets of this ethics stipulate that physicians have an obligation to seek their patients' good, that is to benefit them, and simultaneously a duty to refrain from practices that could harm them. The former obligation is expressed as a principle of beneficence, the latter duty as a principle of nonmaleficence.[17]

The reference to beneficence is closely related to the principle of utility, stating that there is a need for proof in demonstrating that substantial benefits (in the long run, and in aggregate) outweigh any harms for the research subjects themselves.

The discussion on research ethics in biomedical research stems back from the Nuremberg trials and the misconduct of Nazi scientist during the Second World War. Emanating from the Doctors' Trial which took place in Nuremberg between 1947 and 1949, the Nuremberg Code on permissable medical experiments was established as the first code of ethics for research on human subjects. The Nuremberg Code is a list of ten principles for research with human subjects. These principles include directives that research should seek societal good and minimize harm, that the researchers must be scientifically competent, and that voluntary consent is absolutely essential.

The adoption of the Declaration of Helsinki by the World Medical Association (WMA) in 1964 provided a global document that bound physicians to the principles of the Nuremberg.[18] The Declaration requires that benefits must be prioritized so that

---

[17] Childress, J., 1982: *Who Should Decide? Paternalism in Health Care*, Oxford University Press, New York.

Nancy M.P. King and Larry R. Churchill, 2000: Ethical Principles Guiding Research on Child and Adolescent Subjects, *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, Vol. 15, No. 7.

[18] Ramsey, S., 1999: More Development in Developing-World: Research Ethics, in *Lancet* Vol. 354, Issue 9188, p. 1405

”concern for the interests of the subject must always prevail *over* the interest of science and society” (Section I).[19]

In October 2000, the World Medical Association approved a revised version of the Declaration of Helsinki. The new version puts even greater responsibility on researchers in less-developed countries. New guidelines in the Declaration call on researchers to make sure that the local participants in a study, including their fellow countrymen, must be able to benefit from the results of such studies. The 2000 version of the Declaration offers an ethical road map with justice as the most vital concern.[20]

Obviously, social scientists have a lot to learn from the biomedical sciences. But we can also learn from other instances, for instance from Canada. In Canada, there exist a Tri-Council Policy Statement between the Medical Research Council, the Natural Sciences Research Council and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council on *Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Human Subjects*. This document *governs* all research conducted under the auspices of Canadian Universities. It emphasizes three guiding principles: 1) Respect for persons, including respect for autonomy and self-determination, and the obligation to protect those with limited autonomy; 2) beneficence, including both the ethical obligation to maximize benefits while minimizing harms and wrongs; and 3) justice, including the obligation to treat each person in accordance with what is morally right and proper, and ensure an equitable distribution of burdens and benefits.

These principles point to two important, yet potentially contradictory, levels of concern: individual rights and freedoms, and benefit to mankind and society. A crucial point to emphasize regarding autonomy and self-determination, is that personal information is held to be an individual’s property, to be used for the purposes to which the individual has agreed; it does not become the property of the collectors to use in any way they see fit.[21]

---

[19] King, N.M.P. and Churchill, L.R., 2000: Ethical Principles Guiding Research on Child and Adolescent Subjects, *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, Vol. 15, No. 7.

[20] Ramsey, S., 2000: World Medical Association Strengthens Declaration of Helsinki, in *Lancet*, Vol. 356, Issue 9238, p. 1336

[21] Regehr, C., Edwardh, M. and Bradford, J., 2000: Research Ethics and Forensic Patients, in *Canadian Journal of Psychiatry*, Vol. 45, Issue 10, Dec. 2000.

Conclution

Contextual elements are always important when doing research. I believe this to be more so in social research than in natural research, because in social research the study objects are themselves conscious subjects who use their own perceptions and conceptions to interpret both the researcher and research activities.

In conducting social studies there is quite commonly a need for communication between the researcher and the researched. Methodologically, we may therefore say that the success of social studies depends to a substantial extent on a good communication process between the researcher and the research object. This being particularly so when doing participatory research. A typical feature signifying such communications processes is that they are, to a lesser or a stronger degree, intercultural. The strength and importance of the intercultural aspect is dependent on the cultural distance between the researcher and the research object. The longer the distance, the more pronounced will be the intercultural aspect.

An issue which is more or less directly connected to interculturality is the fundamental asymmetry in the relationship between the researcher and the respondent. This asymmetrical relationship is clearly more explicit when doing studies in developing than in developed countries, because in the first instance the encounter between the researcher and the locals involves both an alien, an authority, and a knowledge dimension. Both the form and content of the communication process is dominated by one party, the researcher. As the asymmetrical relationship is to a great extent related to the local people's lack of knowledge about science and research, the ethical responsibility must be put on the researcher.

Doing social studies in developing countries can, in many respects, be characterised by a situation that is not fully ethically tolerable. Not only because just one partner is knowledgeable about what is going on while the other is largely ignorant, but also because the benefits from the research is often too unevenly distributed. Whereas the benefits for the researcher can be rather explicitly stipulated in salary, academic degrees and prestige, it is often much more difficult to calculate the benefits for the local participants, who are both the focus of the research, and the actual owners of the information that the researchers so heavily depend upon. But is it then possible that

this situation can be justified if we refer to Kant's principle of the "autonomy of the will", considering the researcher's autonomy to perform research at his or her will?[22] Kant's ethical ideas are a logical outcome of his belief in the fundamental freedom of the individual as stated in his Critique of Practical Reason. Kant here point to the principle that the welfare of each individual should properly be regarded as an end in itself. [23]

This may be correct, but then only partly. If we are to acknowledge Kant's understanding of the "free will" in a fuller context, we also have to recognise his "Categorical Imperative". As can be seen from the second formulation (Humanity or End in Itself formualtion), the imperative is based on a concept of fairness which can be stated in the following way: "Although I recognise the importance of myself as an end (that is, a person with hopes, desires, and so on), I must realise that what is special about me as a rational being also makes everyone else special, and they too must be seen as ends-in-themselves. So I must regard all persons as ends-in-themselves, rather than just as means to my ends, which imply that I am, after all, no more important than anyone else's".[24]

Translated to a modern social science context, Kant's Categorical Imperative claims that research objects are special subjects, like we are ourselves, and must be treated as ends in themselves, and never as means to the researcher's aims and ambitions. I am not sure that this has always been the case for the relationship between "us" and "the others" within the social sciences.

[22] King, N.M.P. and L.R. Churchill, 2000: Ethical Principles Guiding Research on Child and Adolescent Subjects, Journal of Interpersonal Violence, Vol. 15, Issue 7.

[23] "Immanuel Kant, 1724-1804." (URL: http://www.connect.net/ron/kant.html)

[24] Kant, I, 1785: *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals*, (URL: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Groundwork_of_the_ Metaphysic_of_Morals)