ACTUAL/VIRTUAL CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION IN PRAGMATIC DIMENSION

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The new possibilities offered by technology of ever-present and potentially instant communication have had a fundamental effect on human existence and relations. They have provided an easy and accessible way of creating personal bonds, acquiring knowledge and getting news from all over the world. Together with these privileges there appeared challenges that can make it difficult to establish a positive communicative cross-cultural contact.

Key words: actual/virtual communication space, cross-cultural contact challenges, cultural; dissonance, mutual empasy, pragmatic value of cultural conflict.

Innovations in electronic technology have changed the geographical area of communicative space. Its actual and virtual space has widened immensely. It has united each and every part of the world and, in fact, created a globalised society, unrestricted and unlimited, existing in a virtual space of its own. Their effect has transformed the prospects and possibilities of communication, results of which are particularly vivid in the sphere of cross-cultural relations. Having broken the old trivial idea of communication as a means conductive to and helpful in achieving more or less immediate ends, they have made communicative activity indispensible as the creator and the infrastructure not only of human mind but of human world too. The new possibilities opened by technology of ever-present unbroken and potentially instant communication have had a fundamental effect on human existence and relations. They have changed people's life by allowing international and cross-cultural relationships to become a vital part in it. There appeared more possibilities and options for developing cross-cultural human relations in respect of and potential for empathy and understanding. People have acquired a possibility to create personal bonds, share individual ideas and debate differences on a wide global scale. At the same time, together with these privileges, there appeared a lot of challenges that can make it difficult to establish a positive cross-cultural contact.

Thanks to the World Wide Web man is offered an unprecedented choice of areas for determining his interests and identifying his needs and purposes. He is free to choose and change both the means of and the partners for communicative interactions all over the world. Neither distances nor borders can prevent him from connecting and debating with people sharing his value orientation and professional interests. The scope and variety in the content of alternatives make the choice not only rich but also difficult both in determining the ways and areas of self-realisation and organising positive and fruitful relations in both the actual and the virtual communicative environment.

Due to various communicative facilities man can shape and reshape his communicative space according to his conscious free choice in accordance with his wish, abilities, inclinations and purposes. His choice is motivated by his own ideas as to the quality of life and his needs and expectations. In the wide and open information space of the internet it is easier to envision valuable and desirable areas of activity and find ways to master them in the course of his life experience. His decisions are stimulated also by the

immediate pragmatic challenges that he faces at present or faced in certain periods of his life. Thanks to the internet he has an enormous volume of information of cognitive and cultural character coming from all over the world. It is available to him in a dynamic, changeable way, offering him a wide range of options for development and self-realisation.

In his efforts to select the sphere of his activity, man determines the contours of the communicative environment, where he plans to actualise his abilities and ambitions. His potential inclinations and talents will have a better chance to actualise and develop to the full when and only if he displays his communicative competence, i.e. creativity, tact and readiness to establish a sustainable constructive communicative contact in the cross-cultural space.

Sustainability and productivity of cross-cultural contact is based on the supposition that the man, who enters it, is a conscious, self-sufficient logically consistent and socially aware personality. The level of his social awareness must be high enough to make him focused on establishing a harmonious or, at least, a fairly balanced communicative atmosphere. He is also supposed to be inventive and flexible to envision and diversify the contours of his life perspective. It is presumed that he is able to responsibly consider his expectations and be clear enough as to the feasibility of their realization If expectations are vague or unrealisable, if assumptions are amorphous it is hard to expect cross-cultural relations to have a chance to be positively organised. To make them go, the parties should be open to new information. They should be knowledgeable enough to interpret it so as to generate and organise situations and conditions where its potential can be discovered and effectively implemented. Now as never before, especially in cross-cultural interaction, unfamiliar cultural factors or unknown, unexpected information should be understood as a meaningful, creative factor, encouraging and motivating for productive cooperative activity. Instead of rejecting or criticising cultural otherness and cognitive novelty as a destructive force it is much more promising and constructive to concentrate on looking for new models of interaction which could hopefully facilitate mutual understanding.

Communicative exchange develops successfully when both the received and the returned information is clearly understood and favourably interpreted by each participant. Nowadays it is not always possible to achieve full or at least adequate understanding of messages in an online communicative contact. Sometimes it is hard to reach communicative consensus even in face=to-face encounters. One of the reasons of possible cross-cultural misunderstanding may be due to the format and structure of modern communicative practices. The present technology offers such an enormous volume of diverse information that human mind is overloaded and confused. Filled to overflowing, it can no longer cope with it and interpret its meaning in the traditional linear sequence to be able to understand its logical sense and cognitive message [Zharkykh, 2018] .It is still less likely that vivid cultural difference can be easily overlooked or pass unnoticed which in both cases leads to misinterpretations. Carelessness or unawareness of a partner's cultural identity or inattention in a cross-cultural situation inevitably leads to misunderstanding and estrangement which causes undesirable consequences.

As in any other confrontation or conflict, the situation of cultural misunderstanding should not inevitably result in breach of relations or enmity. With goodwill, patience, improvisation and creativity it may easily be turned into a peaceful and fruitful co-

operation to the benefit of the participants. A constructive method of dealing with confrontations of all kind was suggested in the philosophy of pragmatism. W. James [James, 1917] even defined the main message and function of this philosophy as pacifier and mediator. This idea is expressed in the pragmatic maxim which reads that any conflict can be successfully resolved if the parties are able and willing to look for a way of coordinating mutually acceptable interests. In the heat of confrontation a peaceful outcome of the cross-cultural encounter may seem an illusion at first. Gradually in the course of communication, if the participants sincerely wish to avoid or play down its tension, the critically important issues could be cleared and defined. With the reason of disagreement identified, it will be possible   to resolve it   to mutual satisfaction. The desired peaceful and friendly tone of communicative relation will thus be reached.

The quality side of a cross-cultural event and above all of its process and its outcome is determined not so much by its content and circumstances. Much greater influence on its course is made by the participates' personalities and their individual characteristic features. People are always guided by their own world vision and philosophy. They coordinate their actions with their own expectations   and determine them in accordance with concrete pragmatic purposes [Schiller, 1929]. People behave, act and perceive reality according to their ethical principles, emotional temperament and moral rules. Whatever a man learned and got used to within his native culture and the process of his lifetime will eventually show in this or that way while he is engaged in a cross-cultural encounter. Habitual or endemic cultural mannerisms will consciously/ unconsciously pop out in unfamiliar circumstances and strange culture. In a cross-cultural communicative situation people are, as a rule, faced with a great flow of diverse messages. Their content and form may contain a lot of new, not always clear cognitive and behavioural information. Under its influence people willy-nilly perceive the meaning and the way of its presentation in comparison with their own cultural verbal/nonverbal models.   Their reaction reflects behavioural   stereotypes, acquired and practiced from childhood. . They interpret the message   on the basis of its correspondence to or difference from familiar reality, personal assumptions, biases and factors of knowledge, that characterise their «horizons of understanding» .As often as not, there is a great risk of misunderstanding. To prevent the risk of probable disagreement it is necessary to be patient, polite and tactful.   A spontaneous negative emotional reaction is conductive to further unfriendly tension which is hardly a successful communicative choice.

In the vast diversity of the human world cultural difference is no surprise. Nonetheless, despite the evident plurality of cultural models, there is some spiritual relation of connectedness and similarity at the core of human culture. Its humanistic indissoluble wholeness is common in cultures all over the world. Nevertheless, if people are divided by distances, natural environment or ideology, the indistinguishable influence of this elusive relation imperceptibly conditions difference and change in human culture and experience making them unique. In the imperceptible processes of cultural inter-influence any token of strange culture, unusual behavioural models or unknown information may have its own potential value. It is impossible to foresee how, when and which potential will actualise in its importance and necessity for a given person, people or country. There is no sure theory or method of choosing and making the right potential work. The success or failure of cross-cultural communication depends on the participants'

ability to discover what this potential may be. It takes mutual effort and conscious intention to admit that everybody creates reality in his own way. In a cross-cultural communication participants are supposed to create it together by common, joint effort.

A situation of cultural dissonance or of a conflict of cultural/practical interests has a better chance of positive resolution when the parties are initially set on overlooking cultural differences. Focused on searching for a mutually acceptable consensus, they will be ready to cooperate in the spirit of goodwill. The process of developing a peaceful communicative contact depends on the attitudes of the participants. Entering a cross-cultural situation participants have to make it clear to themselves whether or not its outcome is important and what expectations are connected with its supposed continuation or discontinuance. It is advisable to realistically evaluate the chances of reaching a reasonable level of agreement/mutual understanding. Thus it will be possible to consciously come to a decision about what practical results can be expected and how they could be achieved. To be clear as to why or how it is important when planning or entering a cross-cultural situation is vitally important. Without such a preliminary preparation it is always difficult to make an optimally reasonable choice among indefinite or vague perspectives or unfeasible illusions and separate them from practical options

The process of cross-cultural communication becomes complicated if participants are unaware of the essential factors and peculiarities of the foreign culture. Because of insufficient language competence, especially connected with its idiomatic verbal expression, the probability of unpleasant surprise and offence significantly grows. To create a correspondence in the "horizons of understanding" [Gadamer, 1975] it is, therefore, critically important to clearly and adequately interpret words, gestures, intentions and attitudes of the partner and penetrate his logic.   The purpose of cross-cultural communication does not consist of proving that one's cultural identity is unique and irrefutable. The aim and reason of a cross-cultural situation are to make it proceed until the parties create a new, common "horizon of understanding". Otherwise the cross-cultural encounter is doomed to pragmatic failure. Getting acquainted with a different culture is a process of enriching not only one's horizon of understanding. It is also a chance to enrich one's knowledge of himself and his own culture. As a result the parties create"an ideal speech situation" [Habermas, 1984] i.e. a situation of trust, respect, readiness to listen to and to hear the partner. In context of this situation the feeling of tension, indecision and uncertainty disappears and the partners can easily and to a much fuller degree realise themselves. The degree of self-realisation and the skill of getting things done, i.e. getting a desired result in this process, are based on inclusion, participation and co-operation within the cross-cultural space bearimg local and global character.

In the arising open or smouldering cultural conflict the parties should act in good will. They should be attentive and able to improvise in case of any unexpected turn of events. Unfortunately they often make the mistake of insisting on what is or seems logical and right in their own cultural tradition. In case of cross-cultural situations the traditional opposition "mine/strange" will not be of much help To successfully deal with and constructively resolve the dissonance it is more productive to stop and think what way should be chosen to look for and discern common or similar cultural features without expressing negative emotions. All it takes is the skill and the effort to perceive and interpret cultural inconsistencies in the spirit of goodwill following the principle of

pluralistic thinking. Instead of taking a dogmatic, irreconcilable stand it is much more resultant to try and understand the potential and intentions of the partner and the reason of his verbal/non verbal expression. Irritation, aggressiveness, sharp words or threatening gestures do not help to reach the desired result in any confrontation. It is a quiet, unbiased attitude to the otherness of the partner, to the unusual behaviour and strange words or statements that is always important not only for breaking the tension of a cross-cultural situation. Flexibility and attention in understanding statements and arguments of the partner will help to realise his true intentions and their implication.

Cultural disharmony breeds an oppressive   sense of isolation and estrangement. Its negative influence undermines a person's self-awareness and makes him nervous, suspicious and even hostile. The sustainability of individual self-consciousness in a situation of cultural disbalance is based on the heartfelt necessity of contact with Others. It strongly depends on the ability to establish thoughtful and trusting relationships with actual/possible present/future real/virtual counterparts. It becomes possible to avoid mutual distrust or prejudice by clearly expressing the intention to cooperate in a joint effort of constructing parity relations. This is the ground on which participants can create intercultural empathy and positive pragmatics in the spirit of cross-cultural pluralistic attitude. Acting in this line creates not only conditions for practical interaction and cooperation. This strategy is conductive to the appearance of a new type of information exchange and interpersonal attitudes. Relations of mutual understanding or mutual rejection are based on the ability/inability to perceive, interpret and use unfamiliar information and cultural differences as a means and instrument to make a new constructive reality of interaction.

Cross-cultural confrontations should be taken as a given. They cannot be overcome by passively watching their destructive development or stubbornly insisting on one's own cultural identity. Constructiveness and success of cross-cultural relations is achieved in the process of reasonable consideration of approaches and ethical reactions. In a cross-cultural situation participants are to be careful and watchful not to unintentionally hurt/abuse the counterpart. It requires sincere attention, friendly humour and mutual consideration. Respectful and friendly relations arise from pluralistic thinking/attitude and dialogic consciousness, based on openness and honesty. Communication, cross-cultural or any other, is a two-way process. Its harmony is created by the efforts of all the parties. It is doomed to pragmatic failure if there is no shared intention among them to avoid tensions and not to aggravate differences. The atmosphere of the cross-cultural event is to be built on the reality of responsibilities obligatory for all participants. On the one hand, it is the attitude of openness of the participants, their mutual motion, impulse and goodwill to each other. On the other hand, participants should not start a cross-cultural interaction with a fixed invariable decision. The context of a communicative contact, cross-cultural or not, as a rule, proceeds in the system of autopoaesis. It is always in the process self formation within the interaction of nonlinear cognitive and associative ties and relations. Neither concrete topics, nor desired outcomes, nor the tone of the event remain within the previously defined limits. Its contents and atmosphere develop and change spontaneously. In the process of their cross-cultural contact participants create the structure and the quality of their relations. As a result the communicative process moves in the positive or negative direction. The continuation or cessation of the cross-cultural situation is fully

dependent on the level of their individual responsibility. Constructive harmony in it is born in context of the mutual wish of all participants not to kindle up disagreement but actively and immediately participate in the search for a beneficial resolution of their cross-cultural disagreement.

The very process of joint active search for a way of creating the necessary cross-cultural agreement provokes the appearance and directs the development of the adequate method, most logical and useful in this particular situation. In exchange for former attitudes of disunity each concrete cross-cultural situation requires new approaches to reconcile relations of the parties. There must be no dislike, aggression or enmity in these efforts. Their joint search, based on mutual interest and intention, will finally bring them to the desired result. They will finally devise the outlines of that material or virtual product that they aspired to create together. It will hopefully facilitate feasibility of their cross-cultural understanding. Cross-cultural agreement is not possible to establish unless participants are sincere, well-meaning and honestly strive to reduce cross-cultural tension.

Solidary reality of cross-cultural cooperation must be constructed together, jointly by all those who participate. It is important to remember that one's own cultural identity may no less cause surprise or even indignation.   Cross-cultural relations are based on initial readiness and sincere desire to cooperate in breaking real or far-fetched cultural stereotypes and diversities. In this context the simple truth that there is no absolutely correct and right way to resolve any, even the slightest disagreement, will be a firm foundation for a long lasting cross-cultural interaction.

In spite of overt /hidden cultural differences, or possibly due to them, participants of cross-cultural event can outline a new vision of interaction. Different potentials of cooperation based both on past experience and envisioned for the future relations, may unexpectedly be found. In the process of interested intensive exchange of opinions, remarks and ideas it is possible to generate new interpretations of their significance in context of future cross-cultural solidarity. There is far more hidden potential in such cross-cultural brainstorms than any particular participant could ever imagine.

On the condition of goodwill sincere interest of participants the choice of the communication medium is of no critical importance. Positive and long-term cross-cultural relations can be established in actual, face-to-face interaction and in virtual technological medium. It all depends on the immediate pragmatic necessity, goodwill and communicative ability the participants of the communicative situation demonstrate. As they say – if there a will, there is a way.

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АКТУАЛЬНА / ВІРТУАЛЬНА КРОСКУЛЬТУРНА КОМУНІКАЦІЯ У ПРАГМАТИЧНОМУ ВИМІРІ

Сучасна комунікаційна технологія дає величезні можливості для отримання знань, новин, а також створення особистих контактів повсюди у світі. Разом з цим внаслідок її впливу виникли виклики, які заважають позитивним крос-культурним стосункам. Успіх і продуктивність крос-культурних відношень базується на поважному ставленні, терпінні та здібності учасників знайти взаєморозуміння.

Ключові слова*: актуальна/віртуальна комунікація, виклики кроскультурної комунікації, культурний дисонанс, взаємна емпатія, прагматична цінність культурного конфлікту.*