**Рубрика 1.** Педагогические науки

**УДК**

**CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION IN A MULTI-POLAR WORLD**

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**Abstract:** The present article analyzes the problem of cross-cultural communication in conditions of a multi-polar world as a decisive factor for establishing interaction, collaboration, and dialogue leading to solidarity between global economic superpowers.

**Keywords:** Multi-polar world, cross-cultural communication, stereotypes of cross-cultural communication, sources of cross-cultural misinterpretation.

**МЕЖКУЛЬТУРНАЯ КОММУНИКАЦИЯ В УСЛОВИЯХ МНОГОПОЛЯРНОСТИ МИРА**

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**Аннотация.** В статье рассматривается проблема межкультурной коммуникации в условиях многополярного мира как решающий фактор для установления взаимодействия, сотрудничества и диалога, ведущего к солидарности между глобальными экономическими супердержавами.

**Ключевые слова:** многополярный мир, межкультурная коммуникация, стереотипы межкультурной коммуникации, источники неправильной интерпретации.

**Introduction**

As society becomes more globally connected the ability to communicate crossculturally has gained increasing prominence. Communication has become the life-blood of world community. It embodies the effective tool of “mediator” or “negotiator” that is able to direct the world development for achieving commonweal and prosperity.

Understanding the impact of cross-cultural communication nowadays is an imperative for every nation willing to have a mutual consent necessary to control, monitor and prevent external threats in the sense shaping the present and the future we will live. Without the ability to communicate and understand each other, there would be chaos. Communication is apt to avoid misunderstandings and lead to positive outcomes.

These, not so simple times this inborn ability of an individual is extremely required. Effective communication can lead to overall wellfare of the world community.

**The novelty of the research** is in our attempt to investigate the phenomenon of cross-cultural communication and its impact on establishing commonweal through the prism of a multi-polar world and the global processes taking place all aroung the globe.

**The literature review** on cross-cultural communication has revealed that a decent number of researches in this domain predominantly focus on understanding how individual differences influence the ability to communicate with others. It means that since most individuals grow up within a particular culture having to interact with others from a different cultural background can represent a challenge
[8; 9].

 Exposure to different cultures affects human’s ability to communicate with others in a way that leads to positive outcomes. Researchers involved in cross-cultural studies propose to develop an understanding of the interrelations between cultural dimensions, cultural standards, cross-cultural stereotypes, barriers of cross-cultural communication, process of perception, and sources of cross-cultural misinterpretation [5; 6; 8; 9]. This increased awareness will help an individual to manage their own cross-cultural behavior as well as that of others.

Our perception of others directly affects how we interpret their behavior and actions. Effective cross-cultural communication requires that we form our perceptions on actual scientific explanations of a problem and not merely on personal biases, thus choosing a correct stereotype pattern in the course of communication activity with the representative from a different cultural background [4; 8].

Also, now more than ever before the world community realizes the necessity of establishing dialogue leading to solidarity between global economic superpowers; thus, maintaining order and peace all around the world [6; 7].

Regardless of sex, race, ethnicity, place of residence, religion, social statuses, political power and so on, the humans making up the state must be able to communicate across borders in order to achieve positive results [1; 2; 3; 6; 8; 9].

The nature of our **research aim** is basically to gain a deeper understanding in the aspect of cross-cultural communication. That is effective communication functions as a distinct pathway for the world unity and becomes a decisive factor for establishing successful interaction, and world collaboration between key-gamers of the world arena. This is in itself investigative research in the sense that it does not test any specific theory, but is explorative and could be used to generate new theories instead.

In order to fulfill the aim of this article, we collected data within the framework of our concern (review academic researches, studies and literature). The collected data constituted the base which allowed us to gain an overall insight to the problem. Then we analysed collected findings and concluded the results. The final and logical step in pursuing the goal of the research was formulating of perspectives that could be applied while generating new and possible theories.

**Stating a problem**

*Multi-polar world and megatrends affecting the world “works”*

Nowadays modern world is characterized by serious global changes and trends shaping its core. A diversity of perspectives investigating the issue from different angles is convincing us in urgency and actuality of a problem.

To start with the information age, where the knowledge is our most valuable assets, together with the rapid technological development that has caused this information age are affecting the pace at which change is happening in the world. The pace of change is rapidly increasing, and in order the world organizations are to be successful they need to keep up with this pace [1; 2; 3; 7].

There has been a great change in the economic power ranking during the last 20 years – the emergence of BRIC countries economy. The economic power of BRIC countries will obviously continue to increase pushing down the economic superpowers of the USA and Japan further as time goes [2].

More and more organizations nowadays are expanding from a local to a global market space. Not only Western enterprises expand globally, but enterprises from emerging countries are supporting this direction, especially China and India which are currently establishing themselves as economic centers and are rapidly becoming the new global economic superpowers. The empowerment of individuals and diffusion of power among states and from states to informal networks are the realities of global world [5; 6].

The emergence of a world that is characterized by multiple centers of strong economic power and activity encouraging the changes is referred to a concept interpreted as a “multi-polar world”.

In conditions of multi-polarity of the world two influential megatrends areshaping our world: demographic patterns, especially rapid aging; and growing resource demands which, in the cases of food and water, might lead to scarcities. Underpinning the megatrends are tectonic shifts – critical changes to key features of our global environment that will affect how the world “works”.

Six key game-changers – questions regarding the global economy, governance, conflict, regional instability, technology, and the role of the US, China, Russia, or any other large country as a hegemonic power – are largely determining what kind of world we are living now or will inhabit in the future [7].

In the context of the issue’s complexity and ambiguity exactly the effective communication and cultural diplomacy should represent distinct pathways for the world unity and become crucial and decisive factors for establishing successful interaction, and dialogue between global economic superpowers.

Nowadays the dialogue between civilizations can be viewed in two opposite ways: as a dialogue, leading to solidarity, and as a dialogue, leading to controversy. Whatever it is, it is apparently the communication act between the different poles which provides the bridge that gives the opportunity to interact different civilizations by their nature and socio-cultural component for their further co-existence [5; 6; 7].

*Cross-cultural communication: definition, the concept of perception, stereotypes, sources of cross-cultural misinterpretation, evaluations.*

Communication is the basis not only for inter-civilizational interaction, but also the means that enables individual states to connect. Civilization is a big unity, where one of the core functions of the state is to maintain order and good relations with all its negotiating parties. The establishment of good-neighbourly relations, the elimination of old and the prevention of new hotbeds of conflict are the major issues of the implemented foreign policy of any state today [8].

All іnternational relations and business activities involve communication and are all based on the ability of an individual to communicate successfully with the represantatives of different socio-cultural backgrounds. It means that civilizations, cultures, states, individuals – all have to take into account the cultural characteristics of the communication parties. Even the most “primitive” societies do not differ from the modern societies in terms of the complexity and diversity of operations. There is urgent need to learn to understand and accept other cultures rather than to interpret a particular ethno-cultural group as the unique one and to conclude its superiority to others.

In the context of a multi-polarity of the world civilizations are the constructs that need to be established. The moment all the poles of a multipolar world are regionally integrated, the attempts of the impact, including communication which involves the elements of genocide, assimilation or segregation of individual states within civilizations, will fade. Thus, another stage in making-up the multi-polarity will come. What we need is to support the established understanding and balance. Communication, in its turn, will be the basis for achieving, enhancing and maintaining such solidarity.

Communication is the exchange of meaning. It includes any behavior that another human being perceіves and interprets; it includes sending both verbal messages and nonverbal messages. It, therefore, involves a complex, multilayered, dynamic process through which we exchange meaning.

Communication is also indіrect. It is a symbolic behavior where the ideas, feelings, and pieces of information cannot be communicated directly but must be externalized or symbolized before being communicated.

Any act of communication does not necessarily result in understanding. Cross-cultural communication continually involves misunderstanding caused by misperception, misinterpretation, and mіsevaluation. When the sender of a message comes from one culture and the receiver from another, the chances of accurately transmitting a message are low. The represantatives of different cultural backgrounds see, interpret, and evaluate things differently, and consequently act upon them differently [4].

There is a key to better understand the complex character of communication. It lies in the concept of perception that is the process by which each іndividual selects, organizes, and evaluates stimulі from the external environment to provide meaningful experiences for him or her.

The process of perception is guided by perceptual patterns. They are neіther innate, nor absolute; rather they are selectіve, learned, culturally determined, consistent, and inaccurate. The perception process stipulates the following algorithm for its understanding.

1. Perception is selective. It means that at any time there are too many stimuli in the environment for us – as social creatures – to observe. We screen out most of what we see, hear, taste, and feel. We screen out the overload information and allow only the selected to come through our perceptual screen to our conscious mind [7].
2. Perceptual patterns are learned. We are not born seeing the world in one particular way; our experience teaches us to perceive the world in certain ways.
3. Perception is culturally determined. It means that we learn to see the world in a certain way based on our cultural background.
4. Perception tends to remain constant. Once we see something in a particular way, we continue to see it that way.
5. We see things that do not exist and do not see things that do exist. Our interests, values, beliefs and culture act as filters or forces and lead us to distort, block, and even create what we choose to see and hear. We perceive what we expect to perceive. We perceive things according to our cultural map or “cultural picture” of the world i.d. to what we have already been learned to see [8].

The process of making sense out of our perceptions is interpretation. It occurs when an individual gives meaning to observations and their relationships. Interpretation organizes our experience to guide our behavior. We make assumptions based on our own experience about our perceptions so we will not have to rediscover meanings each time we encounter similar situations.

We only perceive those images that may be meaningful, although we are constantly loaded with more stimuli than we can absorb and more perceptions than we can keep distinct. We group perceived images into familiar categories that help to simplify our environment, become the basis for our interpretations, and allow us to function in a complex world. This process is distinguished as the stereotyping.

In order to establish effective communication act, individuals should be aware of cultural stereotypes and learn to set them aside when faced with contradictory evidence. This is not a secret that stereotyping was failed to be accepted as a natural process and consequently to be used as an advantage. For years it was viewed as a form of primitive thinking, as an unnecessary simplification of reality; it was also viewed as immoral: stereotypes can be inappropriate judgments of individuals based on inaccurate descriptions of groups. Negative views of stereotyping simply put shadow on the ability to understand people’s actual behavior and impair the awareness of one’s own stereotypes. Still, in the light of our research we see the clear necessity to consider the concept of stereotyping more precisely.

Thus, stereotyping involves a form of categorization that organizes our experience and guides our behavior toward ethnic and national groups. Stereotypes never describe individual behavior; on the contrary, they describe the behavioral norm for members of a particular group. Stereotypes can be either helpful, or harmful depending on their usage [4].

Effective stereotyping allows people to understand and act accordingly in new and unfamiliar situations. A stereotype can be helpful when it is:

* *Consciously held.*  It means that an individual should be aware that he or she is associated with a group norm rather than the characteristics of a specific individual.
* *Descriptive rather than evaluative.* It means that the stereotype should describe what people from of a particular group will probably be like and not evaluate those people as good or bad.
* *Accurate.* It means that the stereotype should accurately describe the norm for the group to which the person belongs.
* *The most apparant information about a group.* The information comes prior to having direct information about the specific person or persons involved.
* *Modified, based on further observation and experience.*  This aspect is valid with the actual people and situations.

It is apparent that in the process of communication the inaccurate perceptions of a person or situation can cause misinterpretation. Culture strongly influences, and in many cases, determines our interpretations. Both the categories and the meanings we attach to them are based on our cultural background.

Sources of cross-cultural misinterpretation include a) subconscious cultural “blinders”; b) a lack of cultural self-awareness; c) projected similarity; d) and parochialism [8].

*Subconscious Cultural Blinders.* This source is explained in the following way: we see clearly that most interpretation goes on at a subconscious level that is why we lack awareness of the assumptions we make and their cultural basis. We are never forced by our home culture reality to examine our assumptions or the extent to which they are culturally based, because we share our cultural assumptions with most other members of our country.

*Lack of Cultural Self-Awareness*. It is a widespread thought or belief that the major obstacle in establishing successful international business lies in understanding between the communication parties. Though, as the science and its countless studies say, the greater difficulty involves becoming aware of one’s own cultural background. We are generally least aware of our own cultural characteristics and are quite surprised or embarrased when we are described by the represantatives of other cultures.

The moment when we start considering ourselves through the wide-angle lens of foreigners, we start modifying our behavior, emphasizing our most appropriate and effective characteristics and minimizing those least helpful. To the extent that we are culturally self-aware, we begin predicting the effect our behavior will have on others.

*Projected Similarity.* This principle happens in the case when we assume that people are more similar to ourselves than they actually are, or the situation is more similar to ours when in fact it is not. Projected similarity reflects both a natural and a common process. It involves such processes as assuming, imagining, and actually perceiving similarity when differences exist. Projected similarity particularly handicaps people in cross-cultural situations.

At the basis of projected similarity lies a *subconscious parochialism*. This aspect interprets world outlook from the point of view of one’s own “I”. We assume that there is only one way to be – “our own way” i.d. we see the world and other people in reference to ourselves and to our own way of viewing the world. And this is the question of falling into an illusion of understanding.

Most business partners and negotiating parties do not consider themselves as parochial. They believe that they are able to see the point of view of the members of other cultures. This is not always the case. It is important to understand and respect their world-view, however, it is not obligatory to accept or adopt it. A rigid adherence to our own belief system is a form of parochialism, and parochialism underlies projected similarity.

One of the best exercises for developing empathy and reducing parochialism and projected similarity to the point of view of many educators and scientists in this domain is role reversal. The main idea of this method lies in asking generalizing questions (about family, education, place of residence and so on) that will force a person to see the other person as he or she really is, and not as a mere reflection of you. It forces you to see both the similarities and the differences, and not to imagine similarities when differences actually exist.

Even more than perception and interpretation, cultural description or conditioning strongly affects evaluation. Evaluation involves judging whether someone or something is good or bad. We use home culture as a standard of measurement, judging who or what is normal and good and which is different as abnormal and bad. Our own culture becomes a self-reference criterion. Hence, there is no other culture that is identical to our own; we judge all other cultures as inferior. Evaluation rarely helps in trying to understand or communicate with people from another culture [4; 6].

The target of any communication act is getting the meaning not just the words. Effective cross-cultural communication is possible if to adhere to some steps while communicating. The first is to assume difference until similarity is proven rather than assuming similarity until difference is proven. The second is to try to understand the emphasized description of foreign represantatives, business partners by observing what is actually said and done, rather than interpreting or evaluating it. Describing a situation is the most accurate way to gather information about it. Interpretation and evaluation, unlike description, are based more on the observer’s culture and background than on the observed situation. To that extent, one’s own interpretations and evaluations tell more about oneself than about the situation. The third is to try to understand or interpret the situation common to a foreigner. It means attempts to see it through the eyes of their foreign colleagues or partners. This role reversal limits the myopia of viewing situations strictly from one’s own perspective. The fourth is once the communicators develop an explanation for a situation, they treat the explanation as a hypothesis to be tested and not as a certainty. This checking process allows communicating parties to converge meanings – to delay accepting their interpretations of the situation until they have confirmed them with others.

There are many ways to increase the chances for accurately understanding represantatives of other cultures. Each method or technique of communiucation is based on presenting the message through multiple options. They are stating your position and showing a graph to summarize the same position, paraphrasing to check if the foreign partner has understood your meaning not simply conveying the words, and converging meanings which always means double-checking with a second person that you communicated what you intended.

Perhaps the most difficult skill in cross-cultural communication is being aware that you do not know everything that a situation may not make sense, that your guesses or hypotheses may be wrong, and that the ambiguity in the situation may continue. In this sense cross-cultural awareness complements in-depth self awareness. A lack of self-awareness, in its turn, negates the usefulness of cross cultural awareness.

**The results of the research**

Modern world is characterized by serious global changes and trends shaping its core. In this context effective communication and cultural diplomacy should represent distinct pathways for the world unity and become crucial and decisive factors for establishing successful interaction, and dialogue between global economic superpowers for their further co-existence.

As a pedagogic and linguistic concept communication is the exchange of meaning. It includes any behavior that another human being perceіves and interprets; it includes sending both verbal messages and nonverbal messages. Communication is a symbolic behavior where the ideas, feelings, and pieces of information cannot be communicated directly but must be externalized or symbolized before being communicated.

Any act of communication does not necessarily result in understanding. Cross-cultural communication continually involves misunderstanding caused by misperception, misinterpretation, and mіsevaluation. The key for understanding is in the concept of perception. The process of perception is guided by perceptual patterns; they are selectіve, learned, culturally determined, consistent, and inaccurate.

The process of making sense out of our perceptions is interpretation. It occurs when an individual gives meaning to observations and their relationships. Interpretation organizes our experience to guide our behavior.

Effective communication act is possible when the individuals are aware of cultural stereotypes and are learned to set them aside when faced with contradictory evidence. Stereotyping organizes our experience and guides our behavior toward ethnic and national groups. Stereotypes never describe individual behavior; they describe the behavioral norm for members of a particular group. Stereotypes can be helpful and harmful depending on their usage.

In the process of communication the inaccurate perceptions of a person or situation can cause misinterpretation. Sources of cross-cultural misinterpretation include subconscious cultural “blinders”, a lack of cultural self-awareness, projected similarity, and parochialism.

Cultural conditioning strongly affects evaluation. Evaluation rarely helps in understanding or communicating with people from another culture.

The techniques increasing the chances for understanding people of other cultures are: stating your position and showing a graph to summarize the same position; paraphrasing to check if the foreign partner has understood the meaning; converging meanings which means double-checking with a second person that you communicated what you intended.

**Conclusion**

The present article discusses the timely issue. There is no doubt that modern world recognizes the complex character and strong influence of effective communication on generating the overall welfare and commonweal. In a trivial and common use communication is the key that is “apt to open any soul and close every mouth”. What to say of deep global arrangement of the world that is characterized by valid and significant processes that challenges our reality and create our future. Thus, effective cross-cultural communication functions as an international bridge for establishing dialogue between different poles; it creates the basis and conditions for paving the way in order to regulate order within the world arena.

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