Towards Integrative Intercultural Communication

The challenges in intercultural communication research are thus both conceptual and methodological.

For example, what concept of culture would capture the elusive and constantly changing nature of cultural manifestations in communicative processes?

Or is there any use for culture at all in the current realities?

What kinds of cultural analyses would comprehensively describe the inherent complexities involved in any intercultural encounter today?

How can intercultural communication researchers learn from each other in academic contexts? Although intercultural communication is generally considered to be a multidisciplinary field of scientific inquiry, it typically lacks academic-level interdisciplinary interactions and collaboration among the various approaches investigating culture and its influence on communication.

- An interdisciplinary approach to intercultural communication – integrative intercultural communication – is proposed as a means of unifying various complementary approaches within this multidisciplinary field. This approach aims to provide researchers with ideas and tools to tackle the complexities of the intercultural field, both as individuals and as members of their disciplines. Relatedly, intercultural communication is seen as learning, with intercultural dialogue at its core.

Intercultural Communication: Revisiting the Development of the Field

- In the last sixty years, a diversity of approaches and terminologies have been employed in the field. Specifically, two major research orientations can be distinguished: 'cross-cultural' and 'intercultural'. In the past, these terms were used interchangeably, but they represent distinct perspectives on intercultural communication. Nowadays, 'cross-cultural' generally reflects a lens of comparative research employing group-based demographics, while 'intercultural' typically indicates research that focuses on the nature of the process of interaction between and among culturally complex individuals within culturally complex situations (Salo-Lee & Crawford, 2017). These two research orientations do not necessarily meet in intercultural communication research and are seen often as conflicting currents. What used to separate these two orientations has been the different ways to think about intercultural communication and how toconceptualize culture. Friedman (2014) illustrated the distinctions of these approaches by identifying two 'waves' of cultural analysis in the last few decades.

• The first wave of cultural analysis (most evident in the 1980s) focuses on collective meaning systems of groups (e.g. ethnic, national, organizational).

In this perspective, groups create culture, which is then transmitted to other individuals of the group through socialization. This process is supported and maintained through the group's institutions. In this macro-level approach, culture comprises the values, meanings and norms that shape behaviours (Friedman, 2014). Thus, researchers analysed data through comparative studies, with the unit of analysis often identified with someone's nation or ethnicity. In other words, people 'have' culture (Salo-Lee & Crawford, 2017), and their culture was conceived as encompassing and static.

The second wave of cultural analysis (around the 2000s and ongoing) focuses on the various processes of cultural construction. Culture is no longer viewed as something someone has but rather something that people co-create (Salo-Lee & Crawford, 2017). Moreover, this approach allows for people to identify with multiple cultures. Thus, in research, the unit of analysis focuses on individuals (the micro level) and acknowledges that individuals can and do make use of their cultures in various and creative ways. In this approach, culture is fluid and negotiable, serving as a resource for the individual rather than as a challenge or obstacle as was present in the first wave (Friedman, 2014).

Do We Still Need Culture?

Culture is assumed to influence communication and social interactions, at least to some degree. Despite the ubiquity of culture, as well as its innumerable definitions from various disciplines, the concept of culture remains opaque. Within intercultural communication, 'the biggest problem with the word culture is that nobody seems to know exactly what it means, or rather, that it means very different things to different people' (Scollon, Scollon & Jones, 2012: 3). Moreover, no consensus has been reached regarding how culture influences social interactions or how it can empirically be captured or framed (Busch, 2009; Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009). From its very beginning as an academic discipline, intercultural communicationhas been a multidisciplinary field of inquiry. The most influential disciplines have been psychology, communication, sociology and anthropology. Linguistics also significantly contributed to intercultural communicationstudy (Hart, 1999: 581). However, linguistics has not contributed much to the conceptualization of culture in that 'culture' never has had its own place in classic linguistic theory (Busch, 2009: 2); linguists have borrowed the concept and definitions from other disciplines.

- Investigating primarily the influence of culture on social interactions,Busch (2009) differentiates between 'primordialist' and 'constructionist'notions of culture, which aligns well with Friedman's (2014) waves and could be summarized as follows:

Primordialist notions of culture represent concepts that exist prior to a given situation. Culture's influences on individuals are taken as givens. In social interactions, people react to these influences in a variety of ways that are often outside their awareness and scope of action. The emergence of cultural differences is assumed as having taken place pre-encounter. On the other hand, constructionist notions of culture are based on assumptions that culture and its influences on interaction are constituted uniquely within a given situation. In other words, cultural differences are not a given fact but rather people construct them for their own purposes: culture is situationally produced by the interactants (Busch, 2009: 4).

- According to the primordialist view, culture is a form of specific knowledge, e.g. of particular interaction contexts or particular communicative rules of convention that an outsider needs to learn and internalize (Busch,2009: 5). In constructionist notions of culture, however, culture is what people do: they create culture and cultural differences and identities within situations. Instead of 'being culture', as in the primordialist approach, people are 'doing culture' (Jensen & Andreasen, 2014: 49).

Investigating what people do can expand the scope of cultural analysis even beyond the actual interaction. Scollon (2002) pointed to the cultural complexity present in any social action. Every social action occurs at an intersection of multiple lines of actions, discourses and material and biological life trajectories, and is therefore inevitably culturally complex (Scollon,2002: 2). This cultural complexity calls for a new and different kind of analysis, such as 'nexus analysis' (see Section 4.3).

- One iconic example of the scientific ethos of a particular era, its disciplinary background and research focus is Geert Hofstede´s definition of culture as 'collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one human group from another' (1980: 25). The 'Hofstedian legacy' (Holliday, 2010: 6; see also Dervin & Tournebise, 2013: 534), heavily criticized since the 1990s, has influenced intercultural communication research and practice for decades. One important benefit of recent criticism within the intercultural

communication field is that the interplay among language, identity, culture

(however it is defined) and the historical, personal and material trajectories

of those involved in any intercultural interaction have become visible and

noted (Salo-Lee & Crawford, 2017)

- The advocates of 'new intercultural communication'(e.g. Dervin & Keihäs, 2013) suggest 'interculturality without culture' (Dervin,2011). Notwithstanding, interculturality is frequently perceived as equally diffuse as culture (e.g. Halualani, 2014) even within the same field

(Dervin & Tournebise, 2013: 533). Moulakis (2003: 12) has warned about the danger of 'reification over and above indeterminacy of eclectic usage of intricately elusive terms such as "l´interculturel"'. However, in recent

intercultural communication studies, interculturality is depicted quite

clearly as a process, with its manifestations in social interactions as

momentary and in constant motion (e.g. Lahti, 2015). In those configurations, interculturality comes close to culture in constructivist conceptualizations.

propose a 'rhizomatic approach' to culture, in which a 'rhizome' is a theoretical metaphor for culture that incorporates stability and variation, change and transformation. As for the methodological approach, the nexus analysis is suggested for cultural analysis, and he posits intercultural dialogue, negotiating reality in particular, as a means to support mutual learning.

Towards Integrative Intercultural Communication

Intercultural communication scholars increasingly acknowledge the intricate reciprocity between permanence and variability in culture and cultural expression, with more also voicing the need for analyses that combine macro- and micro-level perspectives (Salo-Lee & Crawford, 2017). Comparative studies can provide culture–interactional studies with valuable baselines for interpretation purposes (Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009: 4; also Frame, 2014: 13). In discussing current challenges for intercultural communication, Poutiainen called for the integration of micro and macro levels of culture, contexts and communication (2014: 5). However, within a profoundly multicultural field, the successful integration of different approaches, as well as dialogue among researchers from diverse disciplines and cultures, can be difficult to implement in practice.

Multidisciplinarity, Interdisciplinarity, Integration

Varying degrees of 'multidisciplinarity' can be identified in scientific work:

weak form (multidisciplinary): examining a socially relevant problem from the perspectives of several scientific fields;

stronger form (interdisciplinary): studying a common object in which researchers learn and employ complementary theoretical approaches but

preserve own identities;

strongest form (transdisciplinary): aiming to establish a new theoretical

framework or paradigm; yet old disciplines continue their existence

(Niiniluoto, 2005).

- Author suggest integrative intercultural communication as a term for the stronger form of multidisciplinarity, i.e. the interdisciplinary approach. 'Integrative' stands for the three 'Is' at the core of this approach:

'interdisciplinarity', 'integration' and 'intercultural dialogue'. In interdisciplinarity, mutual learning is emphasized, while integration entails the ability to engage multiple approaches, to capture the complexities involved in intercultural encounters, and to bring the complementary approaches together in flexible ways. Thus, integration means combining, complementing and sharing learning. Finally, intercultural dialogue, particularly among diverse fields of inquiry, is essential for mutual learning.

For integrative intercultural communication, author draws on the rhizomaticdiscourse approach (e.g. Heller, Pietikäinen & Pujolar, 2018; Pietikäinen, 2014; 2016; Pietikäinen, Compton & Dlaske, 2015), in which culture is imagined as a rhizome. With regard to the methodological approach, nexus analysis (Scollon, 2002; Scollon & Scollon, 2004) is proposed as a tool for cultural analysis, and intercultural dialogue provides an interactive means for operationalizing integrative intercultural communication.

Rhizomatic Approach to Interdisciplinary Research

- The rhizomatic approach draws on the innovative interdisciplinary studies of Sari Pietikäinen and her associates from the fields of multilingualism, minority and indigenous languages, sociolinguistics, ethnography and critical discourse analysis. Although Pietikäinen does not research intercultural communication issues explicitly, her work is highly relevant to the foundation of integrative intercultural communication, as is her use of the rhizome as a metaphor.

The core components of the rhizomatic discourse approach by Pietikäinen and her colleagues are 'rhizome' and 'nexus'. Rhizome represents a dynamic, weblike organic entity for research practices and provides an epistemological metaphor for studying the complexity and connectivity in social phenomena (Heller et al., 2018: 15). Pietikäinen drew on the work of Scollon and Scollon in defining nexus as 'a point where historical trajectories of people, places, discourses, ideas, practices, experiences and objects come together to enable some action which itself alters those historical trajectories in some way as those trajectories emanate from this moment of social action' (Scollon & Scollon, 2004: 159). This definition aligns with the concept of rhizome.

Rhizomatic thinking is a particularly useful approach for trying to understand

the complex dynamics and manifold relationships involved in intercultural encounters. Using rhizome as a metaphor for culture invites looking anew at intercultural situations where static and a priori categorizations do not suffice (e.g. Pietikäinen, 2016: 277).

As a constructionist metaphor, the rhizome represents dynamism, flow and creative transformation. The construct of rhizome, originallyattributed to French philosophers Deleuze and Guattari (1987), is a metaphor of an interconnected multiplicity of ongoing processes and incorporates the idea of complexity, connectivity and intersectionality (Pietikäinen, 2016: 277). Rhizomatic thinking is, according to Pietikäinen (2015: 209), an open system that emerges and transforms in the interaction. It is hence applicable also to integrative intercultural communication, and provides a sufficiently inclusive and malleable concept for use in capturing and

framing the interplay of cultures and interculturality in intercultural interactions

in practice.

Furthermore, the metaphor rhizome incorporates past, present and future. Intercultural encounters can be characterized as an intricate web of cultures, languages, identities, and historical, personal and material

trajectories. In the rhizomatic approach, with the use of analytical tools

such as nexus analysis, one can map those various and changing trajectories while also capturing the connectivity and interaction (Pietikäinen, 2016). Thus the rhizome is an 'interbeing, intermezzo' and reflects 'becoming'rather than 'being' (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; e.g. also Pietikäinen,2016: 278).

Nexus Analysis: A Rhizomatic Tool for Cultural Analysis

- Nexus analysis is an analytic framework that has inspired researchers to further develop and apply a rhizomatic discourse approach in research and knowledge-mobilization activities (e.g. Pietikäinen, 2014; Pietikäinen et al.,2015). Nexus analysis has its origins in discourse analysis; it is however, as Scollon calls it, 'mediated discourse analysis', which centralizes social action rather than discourse as the object of study (2002: 7). It broadens the scope of what discourse analysis formally can take into account when perceiving social action to include all meditated means, not only discursivelinguistic ones (p. 7). Nexus analysis allows exploration into how language and other semiotic and material tools are used to mediate action (Lane, 2014). For the Scollons, nexus analysis is 'the study of semiotic cycles of people, objects and discourses in and through moments of sociocultural importance' (Scollon & Scollon, 2004: x).

Nexus analysis also integrates both micro and macro levels of intercultural communication. Positioning nexus analysis in the wider context of discourse analysis, Scollon and Scollon regard discourse analysis as a field of study that is either the microanalysis of unfolding moments of social interaction or a much broader socio-political-cultural analysis of the relationships among social groups and power interests in the society (2004: 8).

A nexus analysis is hence a strategy to unify these two levels of analysis. The broader social issues are ultimately grounded in micro-actions of social interaction and, conversely, the most mundane micro-actions are nexuses through which the largest cycles of social organization and activity circulate (p. 8).

The practice of nexus analysis involves three main tasks or activities:

engaging the nexus of practice (which includes establishing a zone of

• identification and the negotiated recognition of a significant nexus of

practice);

navigating the nexus of practice (engaging activities such as mapping the

• nexus, setting the circumference, and timescaling and identifying boundary objects);

• changing the nexus of practice (consisting of a motive analysis and a

discourse analysis) (Scollon, 2002: 14).

The nexus of practice is the intersection of multiple practices (or mediated actions) that are recognizable by a group of people, as well as by researchers and others. However, group membership is not essential for a nexus of practice, and shared practices do not imply community membership.

The theoretical focus of a nexus analysis is not a group or community but rather social actions (Lane, 2014).

Without going into the practicalities of nexus analysis, which is outside the scope of this article, one characteristic feature of this framework

should be mentioned, i.e. the role of the researcher. In addition to being a map-maker of sorts, the researcher is an integral part of the nexus of practice being studied, and thus also an agent of social change (Heller

et al., 2018).

- With regard to integrative intercultural communication, the nexus analysis approach encompasses the three Is (interdisciplinarity, integration and intercultural dialogue). Nexus analysis is interdisciplinary in multiple ways, as well as being highly rhizomatic in the ways in which it has been constructed. Scollon and Scollon developed the idea of nexus analysis over a decade, through team work, in a nexus of research and practice, by engaging in dialogues with scholars and practitioners from various fields and cultures, and by recursively revising and self-criticizing their own approach. Thus, they refer to the process of creating nexus analysis as 'organic research – a kind of research that grows and develops and changes structure as it progresses' (Scollon & Scollon, 2004: 148).

Dialogue is an essential part of nexus analysis. Scollon and Scollon highlighted this point when they summarized the basic ethos of this approach:

We close with the plea to continue to open up processes of discussion, debate and interrogation which will ultimately lead to social changes in the discourses within which we live. It is a charge to discourse analysts to locate ourselves within meaningful zones of identification and to continue to pursue our active interrogations of the discourses of our lives. (2004: 151).

Thus the process of intercultural dialogue supports researchers' engagement with the various multifaceted phenomena in scientific inquiry and society.