



DOI: 10.22363/2312-9182-2017-21-4-885-909

INTERCULTURAL MISUNDERSTANDINGS: CAUSES AND SOLUTIONS

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Abstract. Intercultural misunderstandings involve a number of complex causes which can easily escalate into conflicts. Since conflicts are also complex, it is not easy to find solutions because there is no one solution for all problems. Systems Theory, transdisciplinarity, and the social ecological model take a holistic approach in investigating complex phenomena. They permit the creation of a theoretical framework based on previous empirical research and theories across scientific disciplines to identify the relevant elements of complex phenomena and to understand the interrelationship of these elements. Intercultural misunderstandings and conflicts are very complex phenomena because they include culture, perception, identity, ethnocentrism, relationships, trust building and conflict management as well as intercultural communication competence which entails cognition, metacognition, and social metacognition. Since most empirical studies focus on isolated, individual elements in specific contexts, this article describes the theoretical framework of how the various findings and theories developed in different scientific disciplines can be used to form a cohesive framework to help circumvent intercultural misunderstandings and conflicts. In so doing, it follows the general principles of Systems Theory, transdisciplinarity, and the social ecological model.

Keywords: *conflicts, cognition, culture, ethnocentrism, identity, metacognition, perception, relationships, social metacognition, trust*

1. INTRODUCTION

In today's world, intercultural encounters have become common. While in the past only a few select individuals met and interacted with interlocutors from other countries, today intercultural encounters happen almost everywhere — at work, in school, or even in the supermarket. Since most people assume that others think, behave, and perceive the world around them like they do (i.e., the Implicit Personality Theory) (Pedersen 1965; Schneider 1973), this can lead to misunderstandings and even result in unintentional conflicts (i.e. so-called pseudo-conflicts) (Bruner & Tagiuri 1954; Krippendorff & Bermejo 2009). People may intend a particular meaning with a specific message, but their counterpart may attach a different meaning to that message which then results in misunderstandings which could then actually lead to a conflict. Culture can be one of the causes for such misunderstandings and conflicts because culture influences to a large extent how individuals perceive the world around them, what meaning they attach to what they perceive, and it teaches people how to respond to those perceptions (Jandt 2013; Klopff 1998; Lustig & Koester 2013; Oetzel 2009; Samovar, Porter, McDaniel, & Roy 2013). While culture has some influence on people's communication, culture does not explain all aspects of human communication because how individuals communicate with one another and manage conflicts is also influenced by individual characteristics. These in-

dividual characteristics are based on who we are, where we come from, how we perceive the world around us, what peer and media messages we have internalized, how we perceive others, how we think others perceive us, and how we then interact and communicate with others (Adler, Rodman, & du Pré 2013; DeVito 2015; Doise 1996; Gamble & Gamble 2012; Hamacheck 1992).

By their very nature, intercultural misunderstandings (Chen & Starosta 1998; Gudykunst 2005; Jandt 2013; Oetzel 2009) and conflicts (Canary & Lakey 2006; Caughlin & Vangelisit 2006; Roloff & Wright 2013) are complex phenomena. As such, they involve culture, perception, identity, ethnocentrism, relationships, trust, conflict management, intercultural communication competence, cognition, metacognition, and social metacognition. Empirical studies have focused on isolated elements and analyzed them. A number of theories have been developed in different scientific disciplines that seek to explain these elements. Unfortunately, only a few studies have examined the complex interrelationship of all of these elements. Creating a theoretical framework, though, can be helpful in understanding such complex interrelationships (Frodeman 2010) as is the case in intercultural misunderstandings and conflicts.

According to Systems Theory (von Bertalanffy 1968), isolated elements cannot explain a phenomenon because the phenomenon is larger than any isolated part. Communication is an integrated process that occurs within a specific environment; it is not an isolated event. So in order to understand this process, it is necessary to identify the elements that make up this process. Transdisciplinarity (Mittelstrass 2003; Moki 2013) and the social ecological model (Bronfenbrenner 1979, 2005; Bronfenbrenner & Ceci 1994) advocate similar holistic approaches. Such holistic approaches are of interest because they permit the creation of a theoretical framework that transcends disciplinary boundaries and isolated elements by combining studies and theories from different scientific disciplines. It is this theoretical framework which then helps understand the interrelationship of individual elements, and it can even propose potential solutions to complex issues (Frodeman 2010).

This article develops a theoretical framework to explore the interrelationship of meaning and conflict and how, culture, perception, identity as well as ethnocentrism can lead to misunderstandings and conflicts. It also looks at how conflicts can be managed successfully or even prevented through good relationships and trust coupled with intercultural communication competence. In fact, intercultural communication competence and trust are key elements in preventing or overcoming misunderstandings and conflicts. Such competence and trust are created through cognition, metacognition, and social metacognition. In exploring these different elements of intercultural misunderstandings and successful conflict management in line with Systems Theory and the social ecological model, this article applies the principles of transdisciplinarity (Mittelstrass 2003; Moki 2013) by borrowing the theoretical constructs, i.e. theories, from various related scientific disciplines; primarily from communication science and psychology. According to Frodeman (2010), this is a very productive and insightful approach because it is not limited to just one perspective which might be biased. A broader theoretical framework based on the triangulation of different theories reduces potential biases (Frodeman 2010).

That is why this theoretical framework explores the interrelationship of meaning, culture, perception, identity, ethnocentrism, relationships, trust, conflicts, cognition, metacognition, social metacognition, and intercultural communication competence.

2. MISUNDERSTANDINGS IN MEANING

Meanings are in people and not in words (Adler, Rodman, & du Pré 2013; Ogden & Richard 1923; Ruhly 1982). Traditionally, meanings are classified as denotative, connotative, contextual, and figurative (Klopf 1998). While connotative, contextual, and figurative meanings are considered to be fairly subjective, denotative meaning is often considered to be relatively stable because the meaning is fixed. Denotative meaning is said to be the literal, or dictionary, meaning. That is, words have set meanings, and these meanings tend to stand independent of the contexts in which they are used (Adler et al. 2013; Klopf 1998). This guiding principle is followed in traditional foreign instruction when students memorize vocabulary lists assuming that the meaning of a word on one side of the list equals the meaning the word on the other side. After all, the denotative meaning is the same. But is this truly the case? If it is, then it should be very easy to avoid misunderstandings or conflicts as long the right word is picked from the vocabulary list and applied in a grammatically correct sentence. Yet misunderstandings still occur and conflicts erupt even though this is done. Obviously, intercultural communication competence entails more than selecting words from a vocabulary list and using grammatically correct sentences.

When communicating interculturally, it must be realized that the same word may not carry the same denotative meaning across cultures (Klopf 1998). Thus, the German word *Fakultät* can refer to an organizational unit at a German university. British English uses *faculty* for a similar organizational unit at British universities. American English, though, uses *department* for such an organizational unit at a university in the USA. But an American university *department* will have *faculty* members, i.e. the department's teaching staff¹. This is a situation that could result in misunderstandings because the word *faculty* denotes in both dialects of English a similar context. Thus, the grammatically correct statement "I am a member of the English faculty" will be associated in both dialects with a university and in the wider sense also its staff. So both interlocutors would think they share meaning when they hear that sentence. The American English speaker, though, will associate the statement with someone who is from the teaching staff whereas the British English speaker could associate it with the organizational unit at the university that encompasses both teaching and administrative staff members. But the meaning of *faculty*² is such in American and British English that both interlocutors would think they share meaning when in fact they do not. Had one of the interlocutors associated *faculty* with something that is not from the world of academia, then that statement in the larger context of the discourse might have caused irritation or uncertainty in at least one of the interlocutors because that term would not fit into the general context of the

¹ The subsequent discussion is based on the author's own experiences.

² *Faculty* can also mean an inherent mental ability or physical power, e.g. "his mental faculties are inadequate for the intellectual complexity of the task at hand".

discourse. For example, if one of the speakers were to associate *faculty* with an auto repair shop. Or when one dialect uses a word that does not hold any meaning in the other dialect. For example, a speaker of American English would not associate *ballpoint pen* with *biro*, the British English equivalent of *ballpoint pen*. In fact for most Americans, the British English word *biro* holds no meaning. They would, thus, be puzzled by its use in a sentence that refers to writing. Some may even guess that *biro* must be a writing implement on the basis of how it is used in the topic's context. Fortunately for many situations, the context is such that a more general meaning suffices to establish general convergence in meaning.

This situation is even more complex when it involves non-native speakers of English. For example, when a German business manager hears *sales contract*, that manager will associate this specific type of contract with the German civil code, the *Bürgerliches Gesetzbuch*. Someone from the United States will associate sales contract with common law³. Generally speaking, both legal concepts refer to an agreement that regulates the voluntary sale and purchase of a product, but there are also some differences. Under German law, a sales contract is binding if there is no willful deceit and the contracting parties are of sound mind and of legal age when they voluntarily sign the contract without duress. Under U.S. law, a sales contract is also binding under the same terms and conditions as under German law, but it is not binding if there is no consideration. Consideration is a legal principle that does not exist in German contract law. Consideration means that the purchased object must be close to or equivalent of the actual value, otherwise there is no consideration and the contract may be rescinded. For example, if a tie worth ten dollars is sold for one thousand dollars, then there would be no consideration and the contract would not be enforceable. Under German law it could be enforceable if the other terms and condition were met. This small, but vital difference could have considerable impact on the sale of a product and the enforceability of that sales contract. Typically, most parties to such a contract are often not even aware of these differences in meaning when they communicate in English and refer to a sales contract because people tend to assume that everyone shares the same denotative meaning, and often also the connotative meaning. In most encounters, as noted above, the situation does not arise in which it becomes apparent to either one or both parties that meaning is not shared completely because most business contexts do not require a closer examination of the meaning or complete convergence with regard to the meaning of sales contract. A general convergence in most general principles suffices. This latitude permits uninterrupted discourse. Only some specific situations require greater convergence in meaning, for example the price of a specific quantity of goods. If that were not the case, it would hinder the communication and the interaction (Adler et al 2013; Klopff 1998; Lustig & Koester 2013; Oetzel 2009).

From the above examples, it becomes apparent that denotative meaning can vary significantly from one dialect of English to another which can make communication across dialects difficult. The situation gets to be even more complex when non-native

³ This example is based on the author's own experiences gained at an American law school and the conversations with a German law professor.

speakers are involved because many non-native speakers transfer the denotative meaning of the word or concept from their native language into English. As the above example of sales contracts demonstrates, the denotative meaning can vary considerably from one language to another and result in misunderstandings that have the potential for conflicts.

3. CULTURE

Who we are and why we communicate the way we do is in part due to our culture (Doise 1986; Servaes 1989). The construction of the self occurs as a person acts on her or his environment and discovers what one can and cannot do as noted above (Collier & Thomas 1988; Combs & Snygg 1959; Piaget 1954; Yep 1998). Culture plays an important role in determining the rules, regulations, and norms of social interaction, i.e. schemata, behavioral scripts, and frames (Lustig & Koester 2013; Samovar et al. 2013). A person typically becomes aware that other norms might exist when interacting with members from other cultures (Chen & Starosta 1998, Lustig & Koester 2013, Samovar et al. 2013). It is culture that provides the guidelines for the preferred mode of interaction and communication (Doise 1986; Servaes 1989). Culture influences, among other things, communication (Hall 1976), perception (Cole & Scribner 1974; Fisher 1997; Nisbett & Miyamoto 2005), behavior, and identity (Collier & Thomas 1988; Combs & Snygg 1959; Yep 1998).

Perception

As pointed out above, every word has also a connotative meaning, i.e. the meaning or feeling a person associates with a denotative meaning (Adler et al. 2013; Klopff 1998; Samovar et al. 2013). In other words, every person associates a different meaning with the same word, object, phenomenon, behavior, nonverbal cue, etc. This difference in personal meaning can be explained by perception. Perception refers to the identification, organization, and interpretation of sensory stimuli humans are exposed to (Adler et al. 2013; DeVito 2015; Gamble & Gamble 2012; Jandt 2013; Klopff 1998). As people grow up, interact with other people, and experience the world around them, they learn to associate specific meaning(s) with specific words, nonverbal cues, objects, etc. To prevent chaos, people learn to categorize those sensations so that they can reduce the overwhelming complexity of their sensory world into manageable proportions. That is why people place what they experience and learn into categories or classes; for example, people learn to deal with the 7.5 million colors the human eye can discern (assuming there is no visual dysfunction) by assigning them to categories — red, blue, green, yellow, etc. It is culture that often determines the categories into which people place perceived sensory stimuli (Adler et al. 2013; Jandt 2013; Klopff 1998). People learn to respond to those categories as they experienced them and as their culture instructs them. Thus, perception and culture are often interrelated. Obviously, individual divergence exists as noted above. But some broad denotative meanings are shared, to a larger or lesser degree, among the members of a culture. After all, it is this shared denotative meaning that permits constructive interaction among members of that culture (Jandt 2013, Klopff 1998; Lustig & Koester 2013; Oetzel 2009). As a person grows up in a specific cultural environment, that person interacts with other people and learns to associate

specific meaning for specific contexts. That shared meaning permits the successful interaction with other members of that culture (Cole & Scribner 1974; Fisher 1997; Nisbett & Maiyamoto 2005). Culture and perception are, thus, interrelated (Cole & Scribner 1974; Fisher 1997; Nisbett & Maiyamoto 2005).

According to Kuypers (2009), people use frames to filter their perceptions by making some information more relevant than others. Culture and personal experiences teach individuals what is relevant or irrelevant. That is why some people may consider a particular object or behavior to be important while others may not. This has obvious consequences as to what relevance is attached to particular objects or behavior and explains why someone might be insulted by a particular behavior while the interlocutor had no intentions of insulting that other person. But it is perceived as such. The reason is that sensory stimuli are organized within existing knowledge structures (Hewes & Planalp 1987). In other words, the meanings one associated with specific stimuli are based on the associations one has internalized. For example, a cow may be considered an ordinary farm animal that provides milk and/or meat; or it may be considered a holy animal that should not be harmed. In other words, two people viewing the same animal (or object or behavior) may associate completely different meanings or attach different relevance to that same animal (or object or behavior) and, thus, exhibit different reactions to that animal (or object or behavior). And the reaction of the one person to that animal (or object or behavior) may, in turn, be perceived as offensive by the other person even though that was not the intention.

Selecting Sensory Stimuli

At any given moment in time, people are exposed to a host of sensory stimuli. A stimulus can be defined as any input to any of the senses, e.g. sound, sight, smell, taste, touch. Stimuli have to be perceived in order for the consciousness to act upon them; this is called exposure. People tend to select specific stimuli to which they are exposed at any given time (Adler et al. 2013; DeVito 2015; Gamble & Gamble 2012; Klopff 1998). In fact, people sometimes look for specific stimuli while ignoring others. This is called selective perception. Selective perception includes selective attention and selective exposure. Selective attention refers to the anticipation of those things that will fulfill one's needs. For example, looking for specific information in a library during an assignment and deliberately ignoring all the other available information. Selective exposure refers the behavior of people that actively seeks out information and people that support their opinions and actively avoids information or people that contradict their existing opinions, beliefs, attitudes, and values. Selection is based on differential intensity. That is, using something that is different from the ordinary to catch people's attention. For example, a specific product may stand out because of its high price. Past experience is important in making certain selections. If people encounter a particular situation which is perceived to be similar to what they already encountered in the past, it can determine whether they want to seek it out again, or ignore it (Adler et al 2013; DeVito 2015; Gamble & Gamble 2012; Jandt 2013; Klopff 1998). For example, a person may buy the next car from the same auto maker because the previous cars were all reliable. Motivation can also determine what people focus on. For example, if someone is very hungry, then that person will focus on finding food and ignore everything else unrelated to food.

Organizing Sensory Stimuli

Once a sensory stimulus has been recognized, it needs to be organized within existing knowledge structures in order for the sensory stimulus to make sense (Hewes & Planalp 1987; Mitchell 1982; Reiser, Black & Abelson 1985; Salzer, Burks, Laird, Dodge, Pettit, & Bates 1999). This is done within existing frames of reference. The organization of perceived sensory stimuli includes grouping which refers to putting the stimuli into categories that appear to be similar or close to one another (Adler et al. 2013; DeVito 2015; Gamble & Gamble 2012; Jandt 2013; Klopff 1998). That is, information can either be included or excluded from a group, e.g. beef is considered food or taboo.

When information is perceived to be incomplete, then the missing information is added. This is called closure and refers to the tendency of people to fill in the missing pieces (DeVito 2015; Klopff 1998). Sometimes people hear some information that is assumed to be incomplete. People will then attempt to fill in the missing information on the basis of their own past experiences. Closure can fill in the right or the wrong missing information. If it involves a different culture, it is more probable that the added information or the conclusions drawn might be faulty; hence, creating the potential for misunderstandings (Adler et al. 2013; DeVito 2015; Gamble & Gamble 2012; Klopff 1998).

Some organizational concepts are schemata, behavioral scripts, and frames. Schemata are mental templates that are general ideas people have of others, themselves, or social roles (DeVito 2015; DeFleur, Kearney, Plax, & DeFleur 2013; Hewes & Planalp 1987). Schemata allow people to organize the information they come into contact with every day along with those that are already stored in their memory so that new situations become manageable. Schemata are developed from a person's experiences, real ones or those gained through media (De Vito 2015; DeFleur et al. 2013). Behavioral scripts are a sequence of expected behaviors and messages associated with a given situation (Sternberg 2012). A script is a general idea of how an event should play out or unfold, i.e. the rules governing events and their sequence as well as the typical discourse that accompanies these events (DeVito 2015; DeFleur et al. 2013). Framing is a cognitive bias that people develop over time (Plous 1993). Frames help people focus on specific information while filtering out other sensory stimuli considered irrelevant for the situation. Frames define problems, analyze their causes, evaluate the situation, and offer solutions (Kuypers 2009). That is, frames permit people to understand and respond to specific situations in a particular way because people experienced perceived similar events and learned or had been taught to respond in a particular way to those situations. Schemata, scripts, and frames are important because they permit reaction and interaction to be in part without conscious effort; thus, permitting free flowing communication without too many interruptions due to too many deliberations. But they also have the potential for misunderstandings.

Interpretation and Evaluation

Once the information has been organized, it is often interpreted. Interpretation is important because it attaches meaning to what people perceive (Adler et al. 2013; DeVito 2015; Gamble & Gamble 2012; Klopff 1998; Samovar et al. 2013). It, thus, becomes obvious that it is not easy to clearly separate perceptual concepts from interpretation and

evaluation. Interpretation is based on past experiences, expectations, needs, values, beliefs as well as physical and emotional states (DeVito 2009; Klopff 1998; Samovar et al. 2013). That is why two people exposed to the same situation can interpret it differently; even though they are from the same culture.

Three factors influence interpretation: Disconfirmed expectations, predisposition, and attribution (DeVito 2015; Klopff 1998). Disconfirmed expectation refers to the phenomenon that people often anticipate something to happen in a certain way. People expect it to happen that way because that is the way it happened to them before, or it happened to people they know, or it happened in accounts they read, saw, or heard about (Adler et al. 2013; DeVito 2015; Gamble & Gamble 2012; Klopff 1998). If people's expectations are not met in the way it was anticipated, their expectations are disconfirmed. The result can be frustration which has the potential for interpersonal conflicts (Adler et al. 2013; DeVito 2015; Gamble & Gamble 2012; Klopff 1998; Samovar et al. 2013).

Predisposition refers to the phenomenon that people tend to be predisposed to behave in certain ways. Needs, emotional states, values, beliefs, and attitudes constitute those predispositions which help people decide what is good or bad, right or wrong, important or unimportant in what they perceive. These factors play an important role in the meanings people assign to the stimuli they sense and can vary considerably from one person to another (Adler et al. 2013; DeVito 2015; Gamble & Gamble, 2012; Klopff 1998).

Attribution refers to the process of seeking explanations for the observed behavior of others (Adler et al. 2013; DeVito 2015; Gamble & Gamble 2012; Klopff 1998). People try to make sense of the behavior of others and in doing so people attribute causes to that behavior. Even though one may not know why another person behaved the way they did, one assigns a cause which is based on how one would have behaved in the same situation. Most of the time, though, people are guessing; they are not sure of the facts, so they speculate about or imagine the cause. This could result in a problem because an attempt is made to understand why the others behave as they do from one's own perspective and not that of the others. Attribution is useful, though, because it permits one to act and react in new situations which one has not experienced before since one has determined a probable cause for the observed behavior (Adler et al. 2013; DeVito 2015; Gamble & Gamble 2012; Klopff 1998). Under those circumstances, people use attribution to reduce uncertainty and attempt to make the behavior of others more predictable in the future in order to avoid physical and psychological stress which often results during uncertainty (Berger & Calabrese 1975).

People tend to interpret information in ways that are consistent with their own interests, i.e. cognitive consistency. Such self-serving bias influences not only the interpretation of the information but also the subsequent action of the interlocutors. Thus, the perceived message influences the subsequent behavior and communication and not the actual intended message. This divergence in meaning need not have a negative impact on the interlocutors' relationship because misunderstandings are remedied through rationalization (Adler et al. 2013). Rationalization refers to the efforts undertaken by the

interlocutors to understand the perceived message (Adler et al. 2013; DeVito 2015; Gamble & Gamble 2012). If one of the interlocutors appears to behave in a manner contrary to the perceived meaning of the message, the degree of deviation influences the rationalization. Thus, if the degree of deviation is considered to be irrelevant for the context of the message, then it will be ignored. For example, if the encoded messages contains a few minor grammatical mistakes, or the nonverbal behavior contains a few unusual gestures, then people tend to ignore them. If, however, the degree of divergence is large, then the message will be misunderstood in part or entirely. So if one is familiar with a particular culture and a specific individual, then this familiarity will allow one to anticipate messages in a particular context and, thus, achieve greater convergence in meaning (Adler et al. 2013; DeVito 2015; Gamble & Gamble 2012). Because people seek information that reinforces their current perception of the environment and the interaction, they are more likely to filter out undesirable information if it is inconsistent with their expectation of the message content. This is due to the need for cognitive consistency (Adler et al. 2013; DeVito 2015; Gamble & Gamble 2012) as noted above. In an intercultural context, the exchange of meanings is complex because consistency is not always guaranteed due to not just personal differences, but also cultural differences (Chen & Starosta 1998; Gudykunst 2005; Klopff 1998; Oetzel 2009). That is why it is important to familiarize oneself with the other culture and one's communication partner if one wishes to communicate effectively with someone from another culture (Chen & Starosta 1998; Klopff 1998; Oetzel 2009; Samovar et al. 2013).

Once the information has been interpreted, it is evaluated (DeVito 2015; Klopff 1998). In other words, people decide whether they like or dislike what they have perceived and act upon that evaluation — or not, depending on one's past experiences, personality, current situation, etc. Here again, previous experiences and current emotional states — as well as other factors including culture — can determine whether a person considers the interpreted information to be positive, neutral, or negative — and everything in-between. Even the same person can evaluate the same information differently, depending on the circumstances.

4. IDENTITY

How we perceive the world and how the world perceives us has, to some extent, also an influence on our identity. Identity influences how people communicate, i.e. how they create and interpret messages (Doise 1986) and how individuals perceive themselves, i.e. self-concept, which includes the interaction with others (Adler et al. 2013). The self-concept, in turn, consists of self-image and self-esteem (Adler et al. 2013; Gamble & Gamble 2012). Self-image refers to how a person sees herself/himself, how others see that person, and how that person thinks others see her/him. Self-image includes the (Gamble & Gamble 2012) roles one sees oneself perform, the categories one places oneself in, the words one uses to describe or identify oneself, and the understanding of how others see one (metacognition). Self-image is also called self-schema and includes those traits with which people define themselves. Those traits and all information that defines a person are organized in a coherent scheme, i.e. self-referential coding (Rogers, Kuiper, & Kirker 1977).

People with a poor self-image tend to exhibit poor self-worth and could develop social disorders (Rogers et al 1977). People who have a negative self-image can use stereotyping and prejudice to maintain their self-image (Fein & Spencer 1997), creating a potential conflict situation. Florack, Scarabis, and Gosejohann (2005) postulate that stereotyping and prejudices may be used to restore self-esteem. Negative feedback seems to threaten people's self-image and results in evaluating the perceived initiator more negatively in an attempt to restore self-esteem (Fein & Spencer 1997).

Self-esteem refers to how well one likes and values oneself. It is often derived from the success and/or failures one encountered in life (Gamble & Gamble 2012). Self-esteem, thus, influences the self-image with a predominantly positive or negative concept (Adler et al. 2013). Hence, if someone has a generally positive self-perception, then that person will probably have high self-esteem. Someone with high self-esteem is more willing to communicate than someone with low self-esteem (Adler et al. 2013; Hamacheck 1992). And someone with high self-esteem is more likely to think highly of others and expect to be accepted by others. These individuals are not afraid of the reactions of others and perform well when others watch them. When confronted with criticism, they are comfortable defending themselves (Adler et al. 2013). In contrast, someone with a negative self-perception will probably have low self-esteem. People with low self-esteem are likely to be critical of others and expect rejection from them (Adler et al. 2013; Hamacheck 1992). They are also critical of their own performance. People with low self-esteem are sensitive to possible disapproval of others and perform poorly when watched (Adler et al. 2013). They feel threatened by others they perceive as superior and have difficulty in defending themselves against negative comments of others, i.e. a potential for conflict. Self-esteem, thus, has considerable impact on a person's communication (Hamacheck 1992).

If those who are important to one have a positive image of one, this will make one feel accepted, valued, worthwhile, lovable, and significant; hence, one will probably develop a positive self-image with high self-esteem (Adler et al 2013; Gamble & Gamble 2012). If, however, those who are important to one have a negative image of one, one will probably develop a negative self-image with low self-esteem (Adler et al 2013). Identity is, thus, a social construct that is created over time and is subjective rather than fixed and objective (Yep 1998). It is a social construction that is given meaning through interaction with others (Collier & Thomas 1988; Combs & Snygg 1959). Identity is not assigned or concrete; identity is created, reflected, and maintained through interactions with people (Collier & Thomas 1988; Piaget 1954; Yep 1998). Even though a person undergoes change — once identity is in place, it is relatively stable and difficult to alter (Keltikangas 1990). However, from the above discussion, it is clear why individuals within the same cultural context are not identical to one another, but unique individuals who grew up in the same cultural context.

It seems that all humans have a need for an identity that is secure, included, predictable, connected to others, and consistent (Adler et al. 2013; DeVito, 2015; Gamble & Gamble, 2012). Thus, setting the stage for (perceived) positive relationships. If one interacts with people from different cultures, that identity can be threatened because such

encounters are often unpredictable (Gudykunst 1988; Lustig & Koester 2013; Samovar et al. 2013). It is unpredictable because different cultures can use different verbal and nonverbal cues, making communication less predictable. People often feel threatened by unpredictable situations (Berger & Calabrese 1975; Gudykunst 1988; Lustig & Koester 2013; Samovar et al 2013).

5. ETHNOCENTRISM

Ethnocentrism refers to the assumption that one's own culture is the center of everything; consequently, one's cultural traits are seen as natural, correct, and superior to other cultures (Klopf, 1998; Lustig & Koester 2013; Samovar et al. 2013). Culture provides one with a frame of reference with which one can compare objects, behaviors, etc. of other cultures with one's own culture. All cultures teach their members "preferred" ways of responding to the world which are often labeled as "natural" or "appropriate". Consequently, people believe that the values of their culture are natural and correct. Thus, people from other cultures who do things differently might be seen with suspicion.

A fundamental aspect in understanding ethnocentrism is the concept of in-groups and out-groups. As people develop their cultural identities, they learn to differentiate themselves from others in different groups. During interactions with members of one's own groups and those of others, one learns to distinguish the in-group from the out-group. In-groups provide a person with a social identity. Out-groups, in contrast, are perceived as different, and its members as strange. Some people are even taught to avoid specific out-groups because they are different and because they behave incorrectly (Klopf 1998; Lustig & Koester 2013; Samovar et al. 2013).

The Social Identity Theory of Tajfel and Turner (1986) focuses on how the social categorization of people into groups affects interactions between people of different social identities, i.e. national or ethnic culture. In particular, it emphasizes that people have a desire to enhance their self-image and to differentiate themselves from other groups. Awareness of membership in a social group is the most important factor influencing intergroup behaviors and results in establishing a positive social identity. The desire to achieve a positive social identity results in a positive bias favoring the in-group (Tajfel & Turner 1986). Group members achieve this positive identity in several ways including preference and intergroup competition.

The theory explains that individuals with a strong in-group bias or identification have a preference for, or discriminate in favor of, the in-group as a result of striving for positive social identity. They view members of the in-group as more similar to themselves than out-group members and have loyalty toward the in-group and its products. Studies have shown that the greater the individual's in-group identification, the more likely these individuals are to discriminate in favor of the in-group (Gagnon & Bourhis 1996; Perreault & Bourhis 1999). In other words, people give more rewards to their in-group members than the out-group members for the same level of work. In addition to in-group preference, individuals tend to engage in social competition to preserve a positive social identity when interacting with members of out-groups (Turner 1975).

That is why the type and the degree of the relationship between the interlocutors plays a crucial role in the interpretation of the perceived message and its meaning (Adler

et al. 2013; DeVito 2015; Gamble & Gamble 2012). If the degree of divergence is considered irrelevant for the context of the message, it will be ignored. The more familiar one is with the other person and culture, the easier it will be to accurately anticipate and decode messages in a particular context with that person and, thus, achieve greater convergence in meaning (Adler et al. 2013). People are more likely to filter out undesirable information if it is inconsistent with the expectation towards the message content because people have a need for cognitive consistency (Adler et al. 2013; DeVito 2015). The interlocutors often come to a particular conclusion as to what meaning a message has. People tend to interpret the message in ways that are consistent with their own interests. Such self-serving bias influences not only the interpretation of the message, but also the subsequent action of the interlocutors. Consequently, the perceived message influences the subsequent behavior of the interlocutors and not the actual, objective message. Interestingly, this divergence in meaning need not have an impact on the relationship of the interlocutors because misunderstandings may be remedied by rationalization (Adler et al. 2013; DeVito, 2015; Gamble & Gamble, 2012).

6. RELATIONSHIPS AND TRUST

The Communication Accommodation Theory (Giles, Coupland, and Coupland 1991) proposes that the initial orientation of interpersonal encounters is strongly affected by one's personal and social identity which tends to let one view interactions in a particular way (Giles et al. 1991). But the situational constraints, such as the norms, topics, and competitiveness, of each interaction are likely to change the initial orientation of the interactors. During the interaction, people begin to employ different strategies to identify themselves as speakers or to react to the others. These strategies may include individual factors such as personal goals and likes and dislikes; sociolinguistic and behavioral skills in encoding and decoding verbal and nonverbal messages, i.e. cultural preferences; and evaluating one's own behavior and that of others to determine how that interaction is to be viewed (DeVito 2015; Gamble and Gamble 2012). This evaluation will then either change or reinforce the initial orientation during the next interaction, i.e. monitoring and self-control.

In some situations, people are consciously aware of how they interact with others while in other situations they are not (Adler et al. 2013). Abelson (1981) postulates that people use scripts for many routine situations which do not require complete conscious awareness to facilitate an uninterrupted flow of communication. Some people are much more aware of their behavior than others (Gamble and Gamble 2012). These are called high self-monitors who have the ability to pay attention to their own behavior and others' reactions, adjusting their communication to create the desired impression. Low self-monitors express what they are thinking and feeling without much attention to the impression their behavior creates in others. People differ in their degree of identity management (Adler et al. 2013). For example, one may only select that information which confirms one's own self-concept and ignore the rest, i.e. selective perception. Self-awareness, thus, has considerable impact on how one monitors one's own behavior and communication and that of others.

To understand others, one must understand how they look at the world and other people. Self-awareness and how others perceive one can be explored through a psychological testing device known as the Johari Window created by Joseph Luft and Harrington Ingham (1955). The Johari Window consists of four quadrants; namely, the open, blind, hidden, and unknown “panes” (Adler et al. 2013; Gamble and Gamble 2012). The Open pane refers to information about oneself that is known to oneself and others (Adler et al. 2013; Gamble and Gamble 2012). The size of this quadrant varies from one relationship to another and depends on the degree of closeness and trust one shares with another person. The Blind pane contains information about oneself that others are aware of, but oneself is not aware of (Adler et al. 2013; Gamble and Gamble 2012). Some people have a very large blind area and are unaware of their own faults and virtues. The Hidden pane represents one’s hidden self (Adler et al. 2013; Gamble and Gamble 2012). It contains information one knows about oneself but does not want others to know about oneself for fear of being rejected. As one moves from the Hidden pane to the Open pane, one is engaged in self-disclosure. Self-disclosure occurs when one deliberately reveals to others information about oneself that the other person would otherwise not know (Adler et al. 2013; Gamble and Gamble 2012). And finally, the Unknown pane contains information about oneself which neither oneself nor others are aware of (Adler et al. 2013; Gamble and Gamble 2012).

People typically develop a style that is a consistent and preferred way of behaving towards and communicating with others. Some are very open and self-disclose. Their relationships with others are characterized by candor, openness, and sensitivity to the needs and insights of others. Others have a large hidden area. They desire relationships but also greatly fear exposure and generally mistrust others. And if the blind area dominates, then such persons are overly confident of their own opinions and painfully unaware of how they affect others or are perceived by others. People who are dominated by the unknown area adopt a fairly impersonal approach to relationships. Such people usually withdraw from others, avoid disclosure or involvements, and project an image that is rigid, aloof, and uncommunicative (Adler et al 2013; Gamble and Gamble 2012) which is why they will probably be perceived negatively by others. So individual differences can have considerable impact on how individuals communicate with one another.

Relationships are dynamic and influenced through communication with others. Relationships are hierarchical and include strangers, acquaintances, and intimate friends. Different levels of relationships call for different degrees of involvement. Relationships are reciprocal and exist when members in relationship networks satisfy each other’s needs (DeVito 2015). Prolonged reciprocal incompatibility usually results in a breakdown of the relationship. The Social Exchange Theory (Thibaut and Kelley 1959) postulates that people will only work to maintain a relationship as long as the perceived benefits outweigh the costs. The benefits can include self-worth, a sense of personal growth, a greater sense of security, an increased ability to cope with problems, and additional resources. Costs can include the time spent trying to make the relationship work, psychological and physical stress, and damaged self-image. People enter a relationship with a comparison level in mind (DeVito 2015). People have a general idea, standard, or expectation of the kind of rewards and profits they believe they ought to get out of the re-

lationship. When the rewards equal or surpass the comparison level, people feel satisfied about the relationship. People also have a comparison level for alternatives (Thibaut and Kelley 1959). People compare the rewards they get from a current relationship with those they think they can get from an alternative relationship. If it is assumed the present relationship rewards are below those they could get from an alternative one, then they might exit the present relationship. People use communication to explore a relationship in order to determine if they wish to maintain the relationship or not (DeVito 2015), i.e. the Social Penetration Theory which proposes that the development of relationships is determined by the information one discloses to the other person (Altman and Taylor 1973).

The Uncertainty Reduction Theory (Berger and Calabrese, 1975) examines how people come to know each other in the initial stage of relationship development. Uncertainty refers to the cognitive inability to explain one's own or another's feelings and behaviors in interactions because an ambiguous situation evokes anxiety. The theory proposes that interpersonal relationships develop and progress when people are able to reduce the uncertainty about each other. That is why people seek to reduce uncertainty by exchanging information in the process of relationship development and while building trust.

Trust is an outgrowth of interpersonal communication and very important for interpersonal relationships (DeVito 2015; Gamble and Gamble 2012). Trust is a reflection of how secure one is that other people will act in a predicted and desired way. When one trusts other people, one is confident that they will behave as one expects them to and that they will not use whatever personal information one has revealed to them to harm one. The degree of trust one has in others depends on whether prior relationships reinforced trusting behavior or consolidated fears about the risks of exhibiting trusting behavior (DeVito 2015; Gamble and Gamble 2012). Trust is built by developing a positive communication climate that recognizes and acknowledges the other person's ideas and messages in a positive manner. Disconfirming responses, i.e. messages that deny the value of the other person's ideas, can prevent the establishment of trustful relationships as the Communication Accommodation Theory postulates (Adler et al. 2013). This does not mean, though, that one cannot disagree with the other person's opinion. What is important is how one communicates such disagreement. In other words, one needs to avoid personal attacks and/or messages that can be construed as being hurtful (Adler et al. 2013).

Trust creates a paradox: To be able to trust, one must be willing to take the risk of trusting (Rawlins 1983; Rempel and Holmes 1986; Rempel, Holmes, and Zanna 1985). When one risks revealing hidden information about oneself to another person, then one risks being wrong because the other person could use that information against one. But if one fails to take that risk, one can never build trustful relationships with others (Rawlins 1983; Rempel and Holmes 1986; Rempel et al 1985). Tolerance of vulnerability is the degree of trust one places in another person to accept information one discloses without that person hurting one or the relationship (Rawlins 1983). At the same time, trust creates greater tolerance for divergent behavior and communication because a trusted person is given the benefit of the doubt. In fact, one may even make excuses for

the behavior and communication of the other as is explained above by the principles of rationalization and cognitive consistency (Adler et al 2013; DeVito 2015; Gamble and Gamble 2012). Trust, thus, means that both interactors need to be open and practice self-disclosure to reduce the hidden area of the Johari Window and reduce uncertainty.

7. CONFLICTS

Conflicts are perceived disagreements and goal interference. They involve cognition and how the interlocutors define the context within which the conflict occurs (Roloff & Wright 2013). According to Rahim (2002), a conflict is “an interactive process manifested in incompatibility, disagreement, or dissonance within or between social entities (i.e. individual, group, organization, etc.)” (p. 207). In other words, a conflict can also arise due to differences in communication and meaning. Such differences can include low vs. high context communication styles (Imahori 2010) or monochronic vs. polychronic behavior (Ting-Toomey & Oetzel 2007). So cultural differences can result in misperceptions and misunderstandings and lead to conflicts in addition to individual, personal differences. After all, conflicts also arise between individuals from the same culture.

One category of conflicts are pseudo-conflicts which usually involve, among other causes, misunderstandings (Bruner & Tagiuri 1954; Krippendorff & Bermejo 2009). Misunderstandings resemble pseudo-conflicts and can, thus, escalate into real conflicts. Pseudo-conflicts are usually resolved when people realize no conflict actually exists (Gamble & Gamble 2012); otherwise, they could escalate into real conflicts. This means, that it is also important for misunderstandings to be clarified if they do occur or, even better, to prevent them from appearing in the first place. Otherwise, real conflicts can erupt and ending them may be difficult because conflicts are fairly complex (Canary & Lakey 2006; Caughlin & Vangelis 2006; Roloff & Wright 2013) even without the added element of culture. As conflicts escalate, new issues can arise. At the same time, the different frames of the conflict parties create fragmented communication that ignores the concerns of one’s counterpart (Roloff & Wright 2013; Sillars 2010). Thus, conflicts often involve a variety of goals and goal incompatibility, incoherent and paradoxical action, escalating arguments and topic shifts, perceptual differences, and cognitive biases (Roloff & Wright 2013). People rarely take the other’s perspective, but quickly infer what intentions and actions mean without any real knowledge, i.e. faulty attribution (Sillars, Roberts, Leonard, & Dun 2000). Framing is critical to how the conflict parties view each other, their relationship, and the conflict task. Framing directs the attention and steers the focus to what is at stake in a conflict. That is why framing is important in understanding (pseudo) conflicts.

Culture includes preferred means of handling specific situations (Chen & Starosta, 1998; Lustig & Koester, 2013; Samovar et al, 2013). That is why Goffman (1974) notes that the meaning of frames is to be found in culture; hence, explaining why different cultures communicate and manage conflicts differently due to the different frames people have internalized. In fact, people are more willing to accept a particular interpretation if they have existing schemata and frames for specific situations. Frames highlight certain information to make the situation more understandable by selecting specific problem

definitions, speculating about a probable cause, coming to a certain evaluation, and stimulating a particular reaction (Entman 1993). Drake and Donohue (1996) found that if the interlocutors can achieve convergence of their individual frames, then this increases the frequency of agreement, i.e. convergence in meaning. Shared personal values could provide a means of overcoming differences (Lee 2014).

Frame convergence increases the focus, control, positive social attribution and integrativeness of the interlocutors (Drake & Donohue 1996). In line with the Social Exchange Theory, the interlocutors may consider their personal relationship to be more important than maintaining or escalating the conflict. That is why it is so important to establish good relationships based on mutual trust because then the interactors might realize that misunderstandings and misperceptions exist because they communicate openly about the conflict due to that trust and are willing to self-disclose, i.e. the Johari Window.

People usually feel more relaxed and comfortable when they are with someone they trust (Adler et al. 2013; DeVito 2015; Gamble & Gamble 2012). A trustful relationship produces greater tolerance for divergent behavior due to attribution, rationalization, and cognitive consistency as noted above. This provides an opportunity to deescalate a (pseudo) conflict. Successful de-escalation of conflicts requires empathy, putting oneself in the position of the other, mutual tolerance, a positive attitude, and alternative coping mechanisms (Roloff & Ifert 2000). According to Roloff and Wright (2013), people want to understand their social environment. That is why it is important to think about what is going on during a conflict, i.e. applying cognition. Conflicts also require self-monitoring and self-regulatory behavior to adjust the communication of the interactors if the conflicts are to be managed properly (Canary & Lakey 2006; Canary & Spitzberg 1987; Roloff & Wrigth 2013), i.e. metacognition and social metacognition.

8. INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION

While there is disagreement on conceptualizing and measuring intercultural communication competence, there is agreement on its fundamental characteristics (Lustig & Koester 2013). According to Chen and Starosta (1998), intercultural communication competence is the ability to effectively and appropriately communicate to achieve a desired response in a specific environment, i.e. intercultural communication sensitivity. Cultural awareness is the foundation for intercultural communication sensitivity. The more experience one has with cultural difference, the more competent one is in intercultural situations (Dong, Day, & Collaco, 2008). Proficiency in foreign languages tends to increase intercultural communication competence as well because such proficiency increases the likelihood that at least the denotative meaning is shared among the interlocutors (Greenholtz 2000). Hence, Dong et al. (2008) conclude that people need to interact and communicate with members of another culture in order to increase their intercultural communication competence (i.e. social metacognition). Intercultural communication competence seems to “promote an individual’s ability to respect cultural differences, foster multiple cultural identities, and maintain multicultural coexistence...

[which] may enable individuals to be successful in the diverse cultural environment” (Dong et al. 2008: 32).

The competent communicator not only knows how to interact effectively and appropriately, but also how to fulfill her/his own communication goals while using this ability, i.e. adroitness (Chen & Starosta 1998). One, thus, needs to properly perceive one’s own behavior/communication and the intentions and behavior/communication of others. That is, one ought to be able to behave/communicate in a manner that is appropriate and perceived as appropriate by others. One also needs to monitor one’s own behavior/communication and that of others while at the same time properly decoding the other’s behavior/communication, intentions. In return, one needs to possibly adjust one’s behavior/communication if it should prove to be necessary. And one has to be aware of how one’s subsequent behavior/communication is perceived by others so that one can react/ communicate appropriately again if need be (i.e. adroitness).

According to the Anxiety/Uncertainty Management Theory (Gudykunst 2005), people have a certain degree of anxiety, i.e. stress, in encounters with strangers. When the encounter is of an intercultural nature, people tend to be very aware of the cultural differences. In fact, they tend to overemphasize the relevance of culture and ignore individual differences. But when people are mindful, they will have better conscious control of their own communication (Gudykunst 2005). Mindfulness refers to cognition, monitoring, and controlling one’s own behavior and communication so that it is effective in specific situations with specific individuals because the communicator does not apply general, stereotypical categories (e.g. schemata, scripts, frames). Instead, the effective communicator individualizes the categories so that the categories provide a better fit (Gudykunst 2005).

Thus, knowledge and awareness of cultural differences are important in understanding differences in meaning, i.e. cognition. The more one knows of one’s counterpart and her/his culture, the better one can decode her/his behavior and communication (Chen & Starosta 1998; Lustig & Koester 2013; Samovar et al. 2013). Furthermore, self-awareness and self-monitoring help reveal how one communicates, i.e. metacognition. Metacognition refers to monitoring and controlling one’s cognitive processes so as to improve their effectiveness (Brown 1978, 1987; Flavel 1979, 1987; Frith 2012). Veeman, Van Hout-Wolters, and Afflerbach (2006) point out that metacognition relies on cognition. So specific knowledge of another person and another culture is needed to properly apply metacognition. By monitoring how the other person reacts to one’s own behavior and communication, one can adjust one’s own behavior/communication to the reaction of the other person (social metacognition) by applying cognition.

Social metacognition can help manage conflicts effectively because it permits conflicting parties to see the conflict from the perspective of the other party to better isolate and predict the possible behavior/communication of the other and adjust one’s own behavior/communication accordingly (Frith 2012; Jost, Kruglanski, & Nelson 1998). To reach convergence in meaning, it is necessary to put oneself in the position of one’s counterpart and attempt to perceive one’s own behavior/communication from the perspective of one’s counterpart. This calls for familiarity, i.e. cognition, of one’s coun-

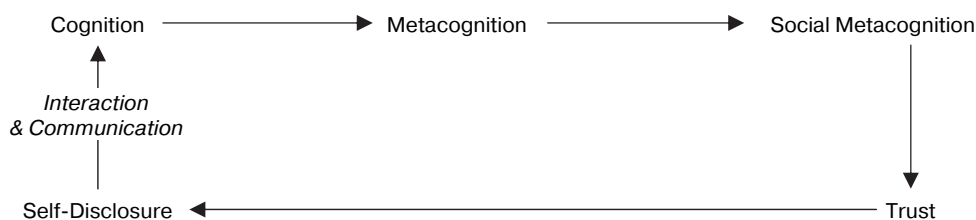
terpart because familiarity fosters mutual self-disclosure and trust which creates better predictability (Frith 2012; Jost et al. 1998). And it requires self- and other-monitoring to properly adjust one's behavior/communication, i.e. social metacognition.

According to Veeman et al. (2006), metacognition (and social metacognition) is most effective if it is learned in the context in which it is to be used, i.e. real world situations. According to Frith (2012), metacognition can be developed through interaction and a willingness to communicate with others about the reasons for one's own actions and perceptions as well as listening to the reasons of one's counterpart presents to explain her or his actions, i.e. practice self-disclosure. This enables people to overcome their lack of direct access to the underlying cognitive processes in themselves and others. Thus, permitting a more accurate image of what the others are seeing and thinking (Frith 2012).

According to Keysar, Hayakawa, and An (2012), framing seems to disappear when it is encountered in a second language. A second language seems to provide greater cognitive and emotional distance allowing people to interpret and evaluate messages less biased. This is probably because most people tend to process a second language less automatically than they do their native language. Consequently, people are more deliberate in their cognition which affects their decision making process; thus, creating decisions that are more systematic and involving more intense monitoring/self-awareness and control to see how one's message is being perceived by the other, i.e. (social metacognition) (Keysar et al 2012). People should also enter any encounter with interlocutors from other cultures with as few preconceived attitudes and frames as possible because existing attitudes and frames are often the basis for future attitudes (Song & Ewoldson 2015). Hence, explaining why people are unlikely to change existing attitudes and frames if they have preconceived attitudes and are intolerant of others. New information can be negated if prior attitudes are held with a high degree of confidence, i.e. the Selective Exposure Theory (Hart, Albarracin, Eagly, Brechan, Lindberg, & Merrill 2009; Sullivan 2009) and the Theory of Cognitive Dissonance (Festinger 1957).

A mismatch of people's implicit and explicit attitudes seems to encourage people to use more elaborate information processes (Song & Ewoldson, 2015). Song and Ewoldson (2015) note that divergent information which is transmitted by trusted people "has a stronger influence on a person's perception of the validity or certainty of attitudinally relevant beliefs than that same information presented by the media" (p. 35). All the more reason to build and maintain a trustful relationship since it encourages constructive interaction due to self-disclosure and trust building.

The interrelationship of the above discussed elements may be depicted as follows:



9. CONCLUSION

From the above discussion, it is apparent that awareness and monitoring one's own behavior and communication as well as that of one's counterpart are important elements which can help reduce misunderstandings and misperceptions because they consider knowledge that is required for effective communication; thus, permitting greater convergence in meaning. They also hone perception in that they expand the range and awareness of schemata, scripts, and frames. They also permit more accurate self-monitoring and other-monitoring. This is, however, only improved through the constructive interaction with one's counterpart because the interaction with the help of cognition and metacognition allows one to see if and how one's own behavior and communication are being perceived by one's counterpart. This interaction also involves self-monitoring and re-adjusting one's behavior and communication to correct misunderstandings and misperceptions — both in oneself and in one's counterpart. But here as well, it is necessary to interact and communicate with one's counterpart to discover if one's own communication and self-evaluation is being perceived and interpreted as intended by one's counterpart as Frith (2012) points out. This should then increase predictability which is also an important component of trust. Trust requires, on the one hand, a tolerance of vulnerability because one does not know what one's counterpart will do with the disclosed information. But without self-disclosure, trust cannot be built. And, on the other hand, trust creates a tolerance for greater divergence because with trust, one tends to give one's counterpart the benefit of the doubt through rationalization and cognitive consistency. Trust helps build stronger relationships because trust reduces uncertainty and anxiety and increases predictability. Predictability permits one to attune one's messages to one's counterpart because one knows how one's counterpart will react to a given message. Trust also increases the likelihood of both interlocutors practicing more self-disclosure. This increased mutual self-disclosure increases cognition, i.e. one gains more knowledge of one's counterpart's behavior and communication; thus, increasing shared meaning and resulting in greater convergence of meaning while also reducing uncertainty and anxiety. With more knowledge, it is possible to improve self-monitoring and controlling one's own behavior and communication, i.e. metacognition, as Veeman et al (2006) note. And with more knowledge of one's counterpart, one will be able to improve one's ability to predict the behavior and reaction of one's counterpart, i.e. social metacognition. This, in turn, will improve the overall communication and provide a more harmonious relationship with fewer misunderstandings and misperceptions; hence, deescalating or even preventing (pseudo) conflicts.

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Article history:

Received: 10 September 2017

Revised: 07 October 2017

Accepted: 15 October 2017

For citation:

Hinner, M. (2017) *Cultural Misunderstandings: Causes and Solutions*. *Russian Journal of Linguistics*, 21 (4), 885—909. DOI: 10.22363/2312-9182-2017-21-4-885-909.

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DOI: 10.22363/2312-9182-2017-21-4-885-909

НЕПОНИМАНИЕ В МЕЖКУЛЬТУРНОЙ КОММУНИКАЦИИ: ПРИЧИНЫ И ПОИСКИ РЕШЕНИЙ

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Межкультурное непонимание вызывается рядом комплексных причин, которые легко могут привести к конфликту. Поскольку конфликт представляет собой сложное явление, его нелегко урегулировать, так как не существует единого решения для всех проблем. Теория систем, междисциплинарный подход и социоэкологическая модель обеспечивают всестороннее рассмотрение сложных явлений. Они позволяют создать теоретическую основу, базирующуюся на предыдущих эмпирических исследованиях и междисциплинарных теориях, с помощью которой можно определить значимые элементы сложных явлений и понять их взаимосвязь. Межкультурное непонимание и конфликты — это комплексные феномены, включающие в себя культуру, восприятие, идентичность, этноцентризм, взаимоотношения, завоевание доверия и управление конфликтами, а также межкультурную коммуникативную компетенцию, предусматривающую когнитивную, метакогнитивную и социальную метакогнитивную деятельность. Поскольку большинство эмпирических исследований направлено на отдельные, изолированные элементы в специфических контекстах, данная статья показывает, как на основе имеющихся данных и теорий, разработанных в различных научных областях, можно создать теоретическую основу для разработки целостной методики по предотвращению межкультурных неудач и конфликтов. В основу положены главные принципы теории систем, трансдисциплинарности и социоэкологической модели.

Ключевые слова: *конфликты, сознание, культура, этноцентризм, идентичность*

История статьи:

Дата поступления в редакцию: 10 сентября 2017

Дата принятия к печати: 15 октября 2017

Для цитирования:

Hinner, M. (2017) Cultural Misunderstandings: Causes and Solutions. *Russian Journal of Linguistics*, 21 (4), 885—909. DOI: 10.22363/2312-9182-2017-21-4-885-909.

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