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INTERCULTURAL MEDIATION IN CONFLICT SITUATIONS A DIDACTIC-METHODOLOGICAL CONCEPTION FOR TOURIST GUIDES

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Intercultural Mediation in Conflict Situations: A Didactic-Methodological Conception for Tourist Guides

Mediación Intercultural en Situaciones de Conflicto: Una Concepción Didáctico- Metodológica Para Guías de Turismo

Dr. C. Alberto Alejandro Morales Domínguez

Abstract- This study investigates the treatment of conflict situations of an intercultural nature in the professional framework of tour guides. Intercultural competence is considered not sufficiently studied within the framework of the postgraduate improvement of the language for professional purposes in the Cuban tourism sector. The objective is focused on developing a didactic-methodological conception and the creation of a conceptual framework towards the development of intercultural competence in tour guides, by making use of the theory of mediation. The article focused on a new definition of intercultural competence and analyzed some reflections on the creation of a conceptual platform to evaluate this competence. In the development of this study, the conceptual model of the Macro Intercultural Competence Coping is presented, suitable to base the intercultural components through the treatment of conflict situations. Its application will facilitate a greater awareness of the characteristics of one's own culture, the reactivation of cultural knowledge and the development of critical thinking for mediation in conflict situations.

Keywords: *intercultural mediation, conflict situations, didactic-methodological conception, tourguides.*

Resumen- Este estudio investiga el tratamiento de situaciones de conflicto de índole intercultural en el marco profesional de los guías turísticos. Se considera a la competencia intercultural no suficientemente estudiada en el marco del perfeccionamiento del posgrado de la lengua con fines profesionales en el sector turístico cubano. El objetivo se centra en desarrollar una concepción didáctico-metodológica y la creación de un marco conceptual hacia el desarrollo de la competencia intercultural en los guías turísticos, al hacer uso de la teoría de la mediación. El artículo se centró en una nueva definición de competencia intercultural y analizó algunas reflexiones sobre la creación de una plataforma conceptual para evaluar esta competencia. En el desarrollo de este estudio se presenta al modelo conceptual de la Macro Competencia Intercultural Afrontar, adecuado para fundamentar los componentes interculturales mediante el tratamiento de las situaciones de conflicto. Su aplicación facilitará una mayor conciencia de las características de la propia cultura, la reactivación de los conocimientos culturales y el desarrollo del pensamiento crítico para la mediación en situaciones de conflicto.

Palabras Clave: *mediación intercultural, situaciones de conflicto, concepción didáctico-metodológica, guías de turismo.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

The Humanity currently lives in the age of communications and relationships. Thanks to the established exchange between individuals from different cultures, it is possible to achieve new levels of contact between foreign tourists and tourism professionals. In this context it becomes possible to raise awareness about the diversity of interests and expectations that make up mutual cooperation and understanding; being this diversity of interests and expectations not assumed, in the same way, by Cuban professionals linked to the tourist sphere. That is why when applying various instruments such as observations, interviews, analysis of film strips, the existence of various conflict situations that gravitate against the satisfactory levels of contact between tourists and tour guides is demonstrated.

The author argues that the solution to conflict situations in this framework must be based on the development of intercultural competence of students. This assessment contributes to the elaboration of a didactic-methodological conception aimed at developing this competence of tourist guides, specifically, of the German language. Under the conditions of this work, conflict situations are defined as "circumstances that gravitate against satisfactory levels of contact between tourists and tour guides. The discrepancies produced in an intercultural exchange, based on different realities and perceptions". What demands the application of strategies for its solution. When considering in this statement the use of strategies for conflict resolution, the definition of strategy by Rodríguez (2006) is assumed, described as "a management tool that facilitates procedures and techniques, which when used, contribute to the achievement of effectiveness in meeting the needs of students.

From the methodological point of view, the qualitative paradigm and the ethnographic method are assumed in this work. This method is assumed in attention to appropriating techniques to collect and analyze information and for the description of students with previous professional experience within the training courses for tourist guides. The results allowed to finding



the internal perspective of the participants in this type of courses. To this end, it was decided to frame as an object of study of this work the intercultural competence in the postgraduate improvement of the German language in the training course for tourist guides of the Cuban tourist training system, while its objective was concentrated on elaborating a conception didactic-methodological study for the development of this competence in German language tour guides.

II. METHODOLOGY MATERIAL AND METHODS

This study establishes that the appearance of conflict situations is inevitable. The persistence of misunderstandings and the non-development of strategies for conflict resolution have been evidenced and there is no single strategy to resolve conflict situations. Therefore, it is vital to consider the diversity of aspects that characterize each of the circumstances and carry out a detailed analysis that allows the strategy to be adapted to each situation.

This analysis has edges in common with the criteria expressed by the authors Cloke and Goldsmith, (1995) in their strategies for conflict resolution, by focusing on the settlement with concessions (occurs when each party to the conflict tries to cede some ground), collaboration (used when there is an intention of the parties in conflict to resolve the mishap by clarifying differences), competition (when the individual seeks satisfy their interests without caring about the impact it has on the other people involved in the conflict), complacency (misused by some guides, sometimes, by trying to calm their clients over their interests; it is seen as a part that sacrifices their interests) and evasion (assuming an attitude of acknowledgment of the existence of a conflict situation and one of the agents or even both, wishes to withdraw or suppress it).

These criteria are related to strategies based on professional experiences, applicable to this context and explicit in the guide profession; namely: competence can be used in decisive and quick actions; evasion, in order to reduce tensions or regain serenity during the guided tour; complacency, when one of the parties is wrong; trade-offs to reach expeditious solutions under time pressures; and collaboration, when the goal is to learn to gain commitment by consensual decision-making, to encourage one or both participants.

This work is based on the assessment that the solution of conflicts must be based on intercultural competence, supported by the knowledge that arises from decision-making and the active exchange of experiences among students, their knowledge and behaviors. Through this knowledge, students can develop certain strategies that allow maintaining, establishing and repairing communication between

people of different languages and cultures and putting into practice appropriate behaviors. Addressing ways to solve conflict situations contributes to the development of a conception to develop this competence. In this context, there is a lack of a conception that promotes this intercultural exchange in German language guides.

Conflict Situations: Way to approach the didactic-methodological conception

The necessary didactic-methodological conception is defined by Morales (2013) as the "global notion of the internal logic that must go through the process of knowledge and transformation of reality. Through its development, it contributes to the actors involved critically appropriating reality to transform it into the creation of a design for educational purposes, assuming a given methodology.

The behavior between two cultures in the sphere of tourism is not always manifested in a cordial way. In order to provide an explanation and assume it as a vital task within this work, it was necessary to extend a critical evaluative inventory on frequent conflict situations of an intercultural nature, exposed by the researchers Costa and Ravetto (2018) and linked to the exchange between German and German language guides. German customers, expressed in the following situations:

- On a trip it may be necessary to make changes and adapt to unexpected situations. These situations cause immediate stress to German clients, who follow the program received at travel agencies in their country to the letter and do not take situations where they have to improvise with pleasure.
- Failure to keep a certain distance from travellers, translated into pretending to be intimate with some members of the group and constantly appealing to issues related to religion, politics and sex can easily offend their sensibilities.
- Non-compliance with the planned schedule for the tour.
- Reactions when several interlocutors are interrupted or speak at the same time.
- The misuse of different registers in a given conversation.
- Not taking into account the client's perspective, adopting hegemonic positions and egocentric attitudes.
- Deficiency of knowledge or disinterest in taking into account certain cultural perceptions about cleanliness, non-verbal signals, familiarity, speed of service, interference in private life, planning and organization.
- Absence of experience in the use of direct/indirect expressions.

These situations were expanded by the author of the work as a result of the application of surveys, of

the investigation of the tangible and hypothetical needs, of the deficiencies and the wishes of the participants in other trainings for tourist guides. The situations are exemplified in the maladjustment to unexpected changes, in the difficulty of assuming improvised situations, in the different perception in the face of compliance with the established norms and in the non-preserving of distance in communication. Likewise, conflict situations are found in the disagreements caused by different interpretations about punctuality, planning, organization and excessive compartmentalization of the representatives of a certain culture, the dismissal of the client's perspective, the adoption of hegemonic positions and egocentric attitudes and in the ignorance of the use of some phrases and implicit.

The Conflict situations may be caused by the poor performance of the tour guide, his cultural and/or linguistic ignorance, misunderstanding, extreme opposition and lack of motivation to recognize, externalize and react to perceptions expressed differently by representatives of other cultures or could also be caused by other external causes linked to the sphere of services. These situations are basically manifested by the professional's lack of knowledge of how to react, behave or manage a situation; or because of misunderstanding, discrepancies and different perceptions about the phenomenon itself, which is interpreted differently by representatives of other cultures.

The highlights have a decisive influence on the behavior of customers who travel to Cuba. This prevents them from becoming repeaters, mediates the results of their stay, the fulfillment of their expectations, the dissemination of the experience upon their return and the persuasion for others to visit us. This situation would be reversed if these aspects were taken into consideration, from the training process of these professionals.

At present, societies are becoming increasingly heterogeneous and individuals and their professional interests come into conflict due to the contradictory nature of their objectives and their modes of action. This consideration is valid when discovering, interpreting and negotiating the behavior of different individuals in situations close to their professional reality, as is the case of the tour guide. In a communicative act within this sphere of action with representatives of other cultures, the appearance of conflicts can be considered inevitable. Every tourist guide dedicates a good part of his time to providing solutions and answers to these. Therefore, in the elaboration of the didactic-methodological conception it was necessary to specify certain aspects that contribute to the treatment of these situations and the strategies already declared to solve them; aspects that are consistent with the interests reflected in the applied instruments.

The strategies will be considered in activities within a training to be designed. The aspects that contribute to the treatment of conflict situations will be expanded upon applying a first experience. These aspects are directed, for example, to the study of a conflict situation that can emerge from diverse behaviors between German professionals and clients as a feature of cultural identity, as well as to question to what extent dialogue between cultures is achieved through different perceptions. on the same subject and that can lead to conflicts. The adaptation of conflict situations linked to non-verbal communication and work with the differences in the perception of courtesy between the representatives of both cultures is also conceived.

Thanks to access to diverse conflict situations, it was possible to verify that tour guides with little experience showed few resources before them. This action led to the diagnosis of strategies for conflict resolution, previously exposed, and their subsequent use. In parallel, they provided a pattern of how they should facilitate the elimination of communication barriers between the tour guide and the tourist.

Mediation in Conflict Situations: Approach from a conception for guides and its application through the Transversal Intercultural Competences Model

Future tour guides will face various conflict situations in their daily professional work, so it will be propitious that in the training to be designed various situations of interaction and disagreement are exemplified that stimulate decision-making in students. The success or failure in this type of interaction will depend, to a great extent, on the perceptions of the differences that separate them. Differences should not be viewed as insurmountable barriers. The important thing is to find points of contact that allow the best understanding.

It is also considered accepted for this work what was stated by Bachmann (2017) on the intercultural approach, as it is considered a relevant element in the foreign language classroom, since "it allows the student not only to reflect from himself and from his own identity, but also to have a positive vision of difference as something enriching for their formation as an individual".

In the elaboration of the conception, the use of various skills by the student will also be considered, as will be exemplified below. It is based on three transverse intercultural macro skills called: diagnose, relate and cope. It is proposed to focus on the latter, that is, on the macro transversal intercultural competence to face (CIT A), according to the characteristics of this study, the CIT model is declared as the most appropriate to measure the cultural knowledge of the participants in the training to design and is exposed, in addition, to the cross-cutting intercultural macro competence to face as an appropriate way to develop creative solutions to conflict situations.

Transversal Intercultural Competencies (CIT), according to the researcher Aneas Álvarez (2003) are made up of knowledge, skills and attitudes that allow diagnosing personal aspects and demands generated by cultural diversity. These skills allow negotiating, communicating and working in intercultural teams and dealing with incidents that arise through intercultural self-learning and problem solving that consider other cultures". This author defines them as "those knowledge, skills and attitudes that allow negotiating, communicating and working in teams and dealing with incidents that arise through intercultural self-learning and problem solving that consider other cultures".

In the scenario linked to the development of job skills (Sánchez, A., 2017) of the student, the promotion of the CIT model is proposed for the diagnosis of the needs generated by intercultural communication and teamwork.

In correspondence with the assumed criterion, concrete actions were achieved that correspond to the macro competencies described in the CIT Model, by directing this work to enhance self-learning capacity, the development of cognitive, affective and emotional strategies to deal with discrepancies and deal with conflict situations, through creative solutions.

The Transversal Intercultural Competence of coping (CIT A) describes the relationship of coping behaviors, together with specific problem-solving strategies, negotiation, participation, decision-making, reward, etc. Coping is assumed in this work as a component of the transversal intercultural macro competence to face intercultural situations, through self-learning, solving problems and developing solutions that take into account the other or other cultures. This macro competence is considered the most appropriate to support the proposed intercultural components on it. The future application of the CIT model is expected to contribute to the measurement of students' cultural knowledge. The cross-cutting intercultural macro competence coping is considered adequate to deal with conflict situations and develop creative solutions for their treatment, applied to this professional sphere.

In this context, it is an assertion about those conducts and behaviors related to the social and technical system that would form part of the repertoire of the macro transversal intercultural competence to face and could be conceived as the list of behaviors to face, together with some specific problem-solving strategies, negotiation, participation, decision making and reward. In this reflection, related elements were found, such as knowledge, strategies and attitudes, indicated in the description of the concept of intercultural competence. What has been expressed favors this conception and will allow the reinsertion of cultural knowledge through the treatment of conflict situations of an intercultural nature.

In future research it will be possible to place the concept of intercultural competence on the basis of this model and this macro competence, in order to then channel, develop and evaluate significant aspects of the research not considered up to now, such as teamwork, progress of learning and decision-making in conflict situations. Although this work focuses its analysis on the transversal intercultural macro competence to face, it does not fail to consider the importance of the other macro competences: diagnose and relate, since the correct diagnosis of the situation must allow to propose the analysis, the goals and the feasible strategies, implemented in interpersonal relationships.

The author of the work values that the student throughout his professional training must acquire knowledge, strategies and assimilate attitudes, which will allow him to diagnose the social and technical requirements linked to his job and the organization in which he operates.

The student will have resources backed by experience or learning from it. The resources available to her must encompass cognitive elements, strategies, behaviors and the affective dimension. These elements will make up the set of the macro transversal intercultural competence to face (CIT A), which is distinguished by three types of components: cognitive, behavioral and emotional, which are exemplified below:

- *The Cognitive Components:* They are related to the knowledge that the student must have to be considered interculturally competent. They are linked to the approach with which intercultural competences are addressed. To achieve intercultural and professional competence, it is considered essential to combine knowledge of beliefs, values and norms (especially in the professional field) and elementary aspects of intercultural communication and the foreign language (FL) for their comprehensive training.
- *Behavioral Components:* They emerge when the shared culture has already been defined and its influence on the relationships of individuals and their social practices have been analysed. An interculturally competent professional, in addition to knowing the existence of these components, must be able to use them.
- *The Emotional Components:* They share the presence of emotional traits related to the psychological characteristics of the individual; the affective treatment generated in each culture through phenomena of threat, attraction or rejection based on insecure relationships, which occur in a visit to a foreign tourist destination, emotional aspects that must be managed competently.

What has been expressed is in accordance with the assumptions assumed for the adjustment of the CIT

model, focused on the promotion of cultural sensitivity. According to the German researcher Müller-Jacquier (2017), cultural sensitivity is presented as "a process of self-development and a resource in conflict situations in which the abandonment of ethnocentrism is required". This process is a significant component of the cross-cutting intercultural macro competence to face, which enables the subject to intervene on a problem and have the probability of solving it. In other words, within the framework of intercultural exchange in the tourism sector, the interculturally competent individual must understand the responses and behaviors of the foreign interlocutors with whom he interacts, as well as his own responses, resulting from the development of his cultural sensitivity.

It is exposed that the adaptation to this professional scenario of the macro transversal intercultural competence to face (CIT A) enables the individual to intervene and solve unforeseen conflict situations. What is expressed implies professional performance and the strategies to be assumed in the face of negotiation, participation and decision-making, when leading a group with representatives of other cultures and when feeling prepared to establish intercultural mediation, understood by the researcher Fuentes (2007) as the "actions to transform reality from relationships with subjects from other cultures. A professionalized resource that aims to contribute to better communication, relationship and integration between people or groups present in a territory, and belonging to one or more cultures". The evaluations exposed also support the imminent elaboration of the didactic-methodological conception, based on the theoretical assumptions presented.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the professional field, intercultural mediation is increasingly necessary due to everything that the globalization process has implied. Specifically, in this sphere of client-tourism professional relationships with different cultures, diversity sometimes leads to a mutual ignorance of both parties and as a consequence clash or conflict occurs. Conflict is a phenomenon that often occurs in interpersonal relationships.

According to the German researcher Wierlacher (2018), the resolution of conflicts will lie in the "ability that the people involved have to analyze them, solve them and take them as a reference to achieve greater mutual understanding". When consensus is not reached between the parties involved, mediation is necessary. When the conflict affects two groups of different nationalities and a mutual agreement is not reached, the prevailing need is to seek intercultural mediation that brings both parties closer together and helps them achieve greater mutual understanding.

When developing mediation in the sphere of tourism, a series of particularities that distinguish it are

observed, such as those of a minority group that lives with the values and beliefs of a majority group or a minority group that demands its right to have a hegemony cultural. For this reason, it is essential that this minority group have access to knowledge of the values and beliefs of the majority in order to achieve greater knowledge and development of the target culture.

Sometimes communication between groups is interrupted by stereotypes and prejudices or by an insufficient level of mastery of the target language. Hence, the need for mediation and the mediator as a flexible element that helps to overcome these obstacles and allows more fluid communication between the affected parties. It then appeals to what Sommer (2018) calls impartiality in conflict resolution and not end up acting as an intermediary. The mediator must verify the availability of the parties to address the conflict and must ensure the conduct of the process, which includes creating harmony between the parties and maintaining it throughout the entire process.

In this study it is pertinent to address a new paradigm of organizational culture, by relating it to mediation and conflict resolution. According to Novel (2010) this paradigm must be implemented through a "global system of attention to diversity, differences and conflict from a cost-efficient perspective that provides elements of penetration in the organization of a culture of mediation and provokes the desired changes in the short, medium and long term and this through commitment to people, processes and results".

An organizational culture must bet on the use of the power of the parties to deconstruct the conflict, establish processes of peaceful dialogue to improve relations between people and, from various trainings, design a structure, proposed globally and systemically, for the prevention and positive conflict management.

This work agrees with the observations of the researcher Held, G. (2019) when highlighting that the resources directed to the deconstruction of a conflict must be directed to "provoke a change in the modes of communication, in order to face the differences and include different levels of acting". These should be aimed at building an organization to achieve the promotion of relational health between clients and users, through the training of mediation skills, the creation of collaborative and communication skills in difficult situations. It is considered feasible that the treatment of the conflict should be carried out through the intervention of a care system, with people trained to function as mediators who help prevent its escalation and associated costs, all together with an intervention of specialized care services.

Mediation is also related to the management of changes and the search for quality in relationships within organizations. In order to implement this culture of mediation within the organization and achieve change,

the Novel researcher (2010) proposes the development of certain strategies aimed at micro-managing the conflict, introducing improvements in communication and transferring knowledge to use tools mediators in people and groups that produce value learning, through the establishment of a system of primary attention to the conflict.

The presented study highlights its uniqueness by specifying a conceptual framework for the elaboration of a conception expressed in a training, according to the pedagogical, technological and design parameters necessary to become an effective means of teaching, based on overcoming students and is aimed at developing their intercultural competence in performance as tour guides.

The current situation stands out in the incursion into an underdeveloped and under-researched area in the context of professional training, specifically, in language improvement courses for professional purposes focused on the development of intercultural competence of tour guides. It is also declared that the work goes into an area that is little investigated in the context of professional training in Cuba, specifically, in language improvement courses for professional purposes focused on the development of intercultural competence of tour guides.

In this context, there is no background on the design of a course to develop this competence in these students. The results of the applied instruments and the description of the selected context confirm that the development of it in overcoming postgraduate courses with professional tourism purposes can be promoted from the elaboration of the didactic-methodological conception. The design of the conception expands the training of the tourist guide student in their cultural knowledge from mixed learning conditions; underdeveloped principle in this context in Cuba.

His contribution to the theory lies in formulating a new definition of intercultural competence based on this context of postgraduate improvement. An adaptation of the Transversal Intercultural Competences Model is proposed for the measurement of cultural knowledge at the beginning of the training course for tourist guides. Its contribution to the practice will be verified in the influence that it will be able to exert on students who begin a training stage as tourist guides and attend training in the context of postgraduate improvement.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

The reflections exposed in this study have prepared a base to evaluate, from it to the intercultural competence of tourist guides and the theory of mediation in the tourist context. These reflections are expected to contribute to further research on the role of this competence in the work of the tour guide.

- The outlined conceptual framework suggests the transversal intercultural competencies (CIT) model as the most appropriate to support the intercultural components.
- In the adequacy of the cross-cutting intercultural competence macro, which is part of this model, similar elements were found such as knowledge, strategies and attitudes that favor this research and will contribute to reinserting cultural knowledge through the treatment of conflict situations. .
- On a practical level, it is hoped that the factors of intercultural competence can be applied in training to design, according to the needs as well as in experimental behaviors that help to regenerate and further expand the growing flow of visitors from the German market to our country.
- Intercultural mediation should be part of the postgraduate training and improvement programs in the teaching of foreign languages for professional tourism purposes in order to develop their intercultural competence. In this training, intercultural mediation can be exercised through simulations or analysis of cases in which real conflicts are shown so that students can demonstrate that they have assimilated the knowledge in the teaching-learning process.
- As a fundamental recommendation, the study and expansion of the critical evaluative inventory of conflict situations of an intercultural nature that is presented, according to the cultural differences of the different representatives of the German-speaking market, from a broad national or individual perspective, is pointed out, recognizing the cultural character of these markets.

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