Grażyna Kiliańska-Przybyło

The Anatomy of Intercultural Encounters

A Sociolinguistic Cross-Cultural Study

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Introduction

The situation of meeting the Other (also called *intercultural encounter*) has always fascinated and intrigued people for a variety of reasons. Because of its character and complexity, intercultural encounter is a problem-solving, emotion-generating, and face-threatening situation, which is inseparably connected with uncertainty, unpredictability, and the unknown. However, nowadays, in an era of social changes (e.g., globalisation, international integration, advance of information technology, increased mobility and migration, international tensions), intercultural encounter is a necessity. Dupuis (in Heyworth et al. 2003: 28) talks about "multilingual daily life" to indicate the frequency of intercultural encounters. Dervin (2007a: 69–70) elaborates on the notion of "liquid times" (a term introduced by the Polish-born British sociologist Zygmunt Bauman in 2000). According to Dervin (2007a: 69),

> in liquid times, we all navigate between different and countless cultures […], and witness an excess of identity. […] As we live in a world where we constantly meet people physically or virtually (acquaintances, friends, strangers, etc.), we need to "identify" (i.e., show resemblance or differentiate) and create culture every time encounters occur.

Dervin (2007a; 2007b) stresses the necessity to redefine some crucial concepts, such as communication process, communicative competence, cross-border interaction, and fixed identity.

Some other researchers focus on processes that shape our intercultural communication and help us derive meaning from intercultural encounters. Intercultural communication, first introduced by Hall and Trager (1953) in *The Analysis of Culture*, is often defined as communication between people representing different cultures (cited by Bystrov

and Yermolenko 2011: 16). According to Byram (2000), intercultural communication aims to reveal the external and internal relationships between different cultures, interpreting each in terms of the other, as well as being able to analyse it and critically understand both native and non-native cultures. Terms similar to the notion of intercultural communication include the following: cross-cultural communication, transcultural communication, interethnic communication, and intercultural interaction (Bystrov and Yermolenko 2011: 16).

Intercultural communication research has its long tradition. As noted by Gudykunst (2004) theorising about intercultural encounter has also made tremendous progress in the last 20 years. The need for effective and competent intecultural communication has been recognised by many researchers (e.g., Chen 2014; Hua 2016; Neuliep 2015). However, the notion of intercultural communication competence itself is very complex and it consists of at least four dimensions, namely Personal Attributes, Communication Skills, Psychological Adaptation, and Cultural Awareness. Each of these dimensions contains some other components (Chen 2014: 19). Literature review reflects this complexity. Gudykunst et al. (in Gudykunst 2004) divide the intergroup and intercultural theories into five categories which are not mutually exclusive:

1. Theories focusing on effective outcomes, which include the following:
   – cultural convergence theory (Barnett and Kincaid 1983; Gudykunst 2004: 11);
   – anxiety and uncertainty management theory (Gudykunst 1994);
   – effective group decision making (Oetzel 1995; Gudykunst 2004: 11);
   – integrated theory of interethnic communication (Kim 1997, 2004 in Gudykunst 2004: 11).
2. Theories focusing on accommodation and adaptation.
3. Theories focusing on identity management.
4. Theories focusing on communication networks.
5. Theories focusing on adjustment and adaptation to new cultural environments (Gudykunst 2004).

According to Chen (2014: 19), the Triangular Model of Intercultural Communication Competence indicates the interrelation of particular aspects in a very precise way and it synthesises the previous literature. Chen (2014: 19) states that the three sides of the triangular model represent the three aspects of cognition (as manifested by intercultural awareness), affective (manifested by intercultural sensitivity), and behaviour (manifested by intercultural effectiveness or adroitness). Thus intercultural communication cannot be limited to the behavioural aspect only,

but it should also take into account the remaining two aspects, that is, the affective aspect and the cognitive one. Some of the current challenges and future directions of ICC research should focus on "the reinvestigation of the nature of intercultural communication competence in global context" and the exploration of the impact of new media on the ICC" (Chen 2014: 23; Neuliep 2015).

Ladegaard and Jenks (2015: 5) state that one of the issues that has been repeatedly discussed in ICC research over the past three decades is "how we conceptualise culture, and how much, or how little, importance we should attach to interlocutors' cultural background when we analyse intercultural encounters." Current research tendencies view "*culture* as a fluid, flexible and multifaceted phenomenon, which is created, negotiated and recreated *in situ* as people engage in talk and other forms of social interaction" (Ladegaard and Jenks 2015: 5). This has a lot in common with the social constructionist approach (Ladegaard and Jenks 2015: 5). However, there are also voices that in order to understand the role of culture in intercultural communication, we need to take into account the importance of background culture and situational demands (i.e., "the possibility of ethnic or cultural marking in communicative behavior and the situational context where participants co-construct (inter)cultures *in situ*," Kecskes 2014: 5, in Ladegaard and Jenks 2015: 6). This view is congruent with a number of studies. According to the Acculturation Model (Schuman 1970, in Niżegorodcew 2011) and Complex System Theory (Larsen-Freeman and Cameron 2008), when two people are engaged in a talk, their 'conversation' emerges from the dynamics of how they talk to each other, while what they say reflects and constructs who they are as social beings (Larsen-Freeman and Cameron 2008: 163, in Niżegorodcew 2011: 32). Consequently, interaction is dependent on the linguistic constraints (e.g., the constant adaptation of their linguistic resources in the service of meaning-making, cf. Larsen-Freeman and Cameron 2008: 135, in Niżegorodcew 2011: 32), contextual constraints and affective constraints (e.g., learner's expectation and learner adaptability, to mention just two).

It is agreed that "intercultural communicative processes are essentially dialogic, and involve recognising and negotiating points of sameness as well as difference" (Holmes 2014: 2; Jokikokko 2010: 13). However, intercultural dialogue is not always a smooth and easy process. Problems often faced in intercultural communication include: cultural identity conflict, anxiety, interpersonal difficulties, value confusion, to name just a few. Yet, difficulties are perceived as normal and indispensable to any process of communication and relation building (Holmes 2014: 2). According to Holmes (2014: 2), the positive thing

about intercultural dialogue lies in "the possibility to (re)negotiate and (re)construct their positions and identities within and across groups, to acknowledge the complexity and diversity of relationships, and to work towards solutions to seemingly intractable divergences and unrelenting postures in situations of conflict." Taking all these aspects into account, it is evident that an intercultural encounter a challenge – the challenge of the 21st century.

The book revolves around two broad concepts, namely, intercultural encounters and narrative inquiry. Both of the concepts underpin the characteristics as well as the challenges of the 21st century. The term intercultural encounter refers to the opportunity and the actual situation of meeting foreigners or experiencing cross-cultural conversations due to mobility, alternative, computer-based means of communication, as well as the plurilingual and multicultural diversity of the society. In this sense, intercultural encounter is not limited to direct contact in the foreign context but encompasses a variety of situations both in the home country context and abroad (these notions would be elaborated upon elsewhere in this book).

The theoretical part of the book aims at discussing the idea of intercultural encounters, characterising their aspects and examining the factors which affect the success of such encounters. Special attention will be focused on the role intercultural encounters play in foreign language learning as well as their impact on shaping learner identity. A closer look will be also given to the nature and mechanisms involved in intercultural encounters as well as the description of contextual factors that may have some impact on the character and nature of intercultural encounters.

The value of intercultural encounters, however, lies not only in what we experience, but most of all, in what we do afterwards, that is, how we narrate and reflect upon the intercultural encounters and what knowledge we derive from them. Consequently, intercultural encounters can be perceived as catalysts for reflection and an incentive to express oneself orally or in writing. This brings us to the second important issue that the book tackles, namely: narrative inquiry or narrative analysis, which is related to the role of narratives in organising and shaping individuals' experiences.

Human beings are often defined as *Homo narrans* ("story-telling man," "the story-telling organism" – Straś-Romanowska, Bartosz, and Żurko 2010). This means that any individual leads a storied life and tells stories to others. In fact, *stories* or *narratives* are perceived as indispensable elements of interpersonal interaction and communication of one's own personal experiences (Straś-Romanowska, Bartosz, and Żurko

2010: 9). A story is compared to a vehicle as it provides a stimulus for learning or noticing particular things (Garvie 1990: 67). Story is also described as a theme, because it allows one to organise unrelated events into a sequence or a chain (Garvie 1990: 67). Consequently, narrative competence and narrative intelligence seem as important as communicative competence and cognitive intelligence, respectively.

The empirical part of this book analyses narratives collected from Polish and Turkish students of English. The main objective of the research is to examine cross-cultural differences and similarities that affect the perception and narration of intercultural encounters. The research project involves several stages, including brainstorming and group discussion, the training proper as well as the production of narratives. For better understanding of the research area, it is essential to make a distinction between the following concepts: story, narrative, and *narration*. According to Garvie (1990: 67), the story is the raw material, the theme of the event. Putting a structure to it and arranging it sequentially means producing a narrative, whereas the process of telling is the narration. As Garvie (1990: 67) further explains, the story carries the potential, the narrative is the "cognitive resource" – a meaning making strategy, and the narration is the *sharing* of it orally or in literature. In this book, the author intends to focus mostly on the meanings implied by the narratives produced by the research subjects. Consequently, a closer look would be given to the topical analysis of those narratives. Another aspect of the research concerns the examination of mechanisms regulating the very process of narrative processing and production. However, the terms: story and narrative may occasionally be used interchangeably so as to avoid the over-repetition of the word narrative.

Data was collected by means of questionnaires, including scales; trainer's observation and records, and the students' narratives. Qualitative analysis (focusing on topical categories in the narratives) and quantitative analysis (based on LIWC programme and the calculation of the Pearson correlation coefficient) helped to evaluate research objectives and formulate final conclusions.

Grażyna Kiliańska-Przybyło

Anatomia spotkań interkulturowych
Socjolingwistyczne studium porównawcze

Streszczenie

Książka zatytułowana *Anatomia spotkań interkulturowych. Socjolingwistyczne studium porównawcze* poświęcona została analizie spotkań interkulturowych (sytuacji, podczas których stykamy się z przedstawicielami innych kultur). W dobie globalizacji, zacierania się granic i wysokiej mobilności ludzi spotkanie z Obcym jest koniecznością i wyzwaniem (Bauman 2000; Heyworth et al. 2003; Dervin 2007a, 2007b; Kapuściński 2004). Spotkania interkulturowe są jednakże istotne także z innych względów. Stanowią lustro odbijające zachowanie innych osób, przez co pozwalają zrozumieć siebie samych i kulturę własnego kraju. Nieprzewidywalność oraz indywidualny charakter takich spotkań jest z kolei silnym czynnikiem sprzyjającym refleksji nad tym, co istotne w komunikacji interpersonalnej i interkulturowej.

Część teoretyczna książki przedstawia charakterystykę spotkań interkulturowych oraz opisuje różne wymiary, m.in. językowy, afektywny czy komunikacyjny. W rozdziale tym omówiono również pojęcie kompetencji interkulturowej, jako kluczowej w kontakcie z przedstawicielami innych kultur, oraz zawarto opis barier, które utrudniają lub uniemożliwiają komunikację z Innym. Ze względu na fakt, iż badanie w dużej mierze opiera się na narracjach osobistych jego uczestników, część teoretyczna przedstawia najważniejsze założenia nurtu narracyjnego, skupiając się na cechach tzw. *homo narrans* (człowieka opowiadającego historie).

Część empiryczna opisuje badanie przeprowadzone wśród trzech grup studentów (dwóch polskich – studenci studiów licencjackich i magisterskich filologii angielskiej Uniwerstytetu Śląskiego w Katowicach oraz grupy studentów tureckich filologii angielskiej na Uniwersytecie Çukurova w Adanie; każda z grup liczyła 50 osób). Badanie składało się z kilku etapów. Studenci najpierw uczestniczyli w krótkim treningu interkulturowym, a następnie poproszeni zostali o opisanie znaczącego w ich opinii spotkania z przedstawicielami innych kultur (narracja osobista opisująca zdarzenie krytyczne). Dodatkowo w badaniu zastosowano kwestionariusz oraz skalę wrażliwości interkulturowej.

Wyniki badania wskazują, iż umiejętność radzenia sobie ze spotkaniami interkulturowymi, a co za tym idzie, kompetencją interkulturową, zależy od czynników indywidualnych, stopnia znajomości języka obcego oraz kontekstu socjokulturowego, z którego wywodzą się uczestnicy. Ten ostatni wpływa na charakter i rodzaj kontaktów z przedstawicielami innych kultur, sposób prowadzenia komunikacji czy podejście do

kultury kraju języka ojczystego. Samo spotkanie interkulturowe traktowane było przez jego uczestników jako:

– okazja do komunikowania się w języku docelowym (rozwijanie umiejętności komunikacji interpersonalnej) i jednocześnie sprawdzian własnych umiejętności;
– źródło wiedzy, informacji i ciekawostek z zakresu wiedzy ogólnej na temat kultur innych krajów; źródło nabycia lub poszerzenia wiedzy ogólnej;
– czynnik zwiększający świadomość językową (zwłaszcza na temat kontekstu i użycia języka w sytuacjach uwarunkowanych kulturowo);
– katalizator przyspieszający autorefleksję, a tym samym zwiększający wiedzę uczestników o samych sobie;
– możliwość uświadomienia sobie i weryfikacji stereotypów oraz własnych opinii na temat przedstawicieli różnych kultur.

Grażyna Kiliańska-Przybyło

Anatomie der interkulturellen Treffen
Eine vergleichende soziolinguistische Studie

Zusammenfassung

Das Buch unter dem Titel „Anatomie der interkulturellen Treffen. Eine vergleichende soziolinguistische Studie" befasst sich mit der Analyse interkultureller Treffen (Situationen, wo wir mit den Vertretern von anderen Kulturen konfrontiert werden). Im Zeitalter der Globalisierung, des Verwischens von Grenzen und einer hohen Mobilität der Menschen wird das Treffen mit einem Fremden zur Notwendigkeit und Herausforderung (Bauman 2000; Heyworth et al. 2003; Dervin 2007a, 2007b; Kapuściński 2004). Interkulturelle Treffen sind jedoch aus mehreren anderen Gründen wichtig und nämlich: Sie spiegeln das Verhalten von anderen Menschen wider, wodurch wir uns selbst und die Kultur unseres eigenen Landes verstehen können. Durch die Unvorhersehbarkeit und den individuellen Charakter von solchen Treffen wird wiederum die Reflexion über wichtige Elemente in der interpersonalen und interkulturellen Kommunikation begünstigt.

Im theoretischen Teil des Buches wird die Charakteristik der interkulturellen Treffen dargestellt und ihre verschiedenen Dimensionen, u.a.: auf sprachlichem, affektivem und kommunikativem Gebiet, beschrieben. In diesem Kapitel wurde auch der Begriff „Interkulturelle Kompetenz" als Schlüsselkompetenz beim Kontakt mit den Vertretern von anderen Kulturen besprochen und Hindernisse, die die Kommunikation mit den Fremden schwer oder unmöglich machen, beschrieben. In Anbetracht der Tatsache, dass die Prüfung überwiegend auf den persönlich von Prüfungsteilnehmern erzählten Geschichten beruht, wurden im theoretischen Teil die wichtigsten Voraussetzungen der Erzähltendenz dargestellt, wobei der Schwerpunkt auf die Merkmale vom so genannten „homo narrans" (der Mensch als Geschichtenerzähler) gelegt wird.

Der empirische Teil beschreibt die Prüfung, die unter 3 Gruppen von Studenten durchgeführt wurde (d.h.: unter 2 polnischen Gruppen von Studierenden – Bachelor- und Masterstudiengänge für Englische Philologie an der Schlesischen Universität – sowie unter einer Gruppe von türkischen Studierenden der Englischen Philologie an der Universität Çukurova in Adana; jede Gruppe zählte 50 Personen). Die Prüfung bestand aus mehreren Etappen. Zuerst nahmen die Studenten an einem kurzen interkulturellen Training teil, danach wurden sie darum gebeten, das – nach ihrer Ansicht – bedeutende Treffen mit den Vertretern von anderen Kulturen zu beschreiben (eine persönliche Erzählung, die einen kritischen Vorgang beschreibt). Zusätzlich wurde für die Prüfung der Fragebogen und die Skala der interkulturellen Sensibilität verwendet.

Die Prüfergebnisse deuten darauf hin, dass die Fähigkeit zum beidseitig zufriedenstellenden Umgang mit Menschen unterschiedlicher kultureller Orientierung und – was damit verbunden ist – interkulturelle Kompetenz von individuellen Faktoren, Fremdsprachenkompetenzen und vom soziokulturellen Raum, aus dem die Prüfungsteilnehmer stammen, abhängig sind. Der soziokulturelle Kontext erwies sich als wesentlich, weil er den Charakter und die Art der Kontakte mit Repräsentanten anderer Kulturen, die Art der Kommunikation, den Ansatz für die Kultur des Muttersprachlandes beeinflusst hat. Das interkulturelle Treffen war für die Teilnehmer:

– eine gute Gelegenheit, sich in der Zielsprache (Weiterentwicklung der interpersonellen Kommunikation) zu verständigen und gleichzeitig eigene Kenntnisse zu prüfen,
– eine Quelle von Wissen, Informationen und Neuigkeiten im Bereich des allgemeines Wissens über Kulturen von anderen Ländern; eine gute Gelegenheit, allgemeines Wissen zu erwerben oder zu erweitern und
– ein Faktor zur Erhöhung des sprachlichen Bewusstseins (insbesondere in Bezug auf den Kontext und den Gebrauch der Sprache in den kulturell bedingten Situationen),
– ein Katalysator zur Förderung der Autoreflexion und somit zur Erhöhung des Wissens von Teilnehmern über sich selbst,
– eine Möglichkeit der Bewusstmachung sowie Beurteilung und Prüfung von Stereotypen und eigenen Meinungen über die Repräsentanten von anderen Kulturen.

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