

ON VERBAL CODES OF COMMUNICATION

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Cultural bumps can be experienced even without being directly involved in intercultural communication, as many people our days use texts and other materials produced outside their own culture.

The present paper will concentrate just on some issues that have to be taken into consideration while dealing with a different culture text.

1. High and low context communication styles predetermine text structure. Intercultural communication distinguishes several types of text structure typical for certain cultures. The three biggest groups can be represented by the English —direct, straight to the point, the message first

text, the Oriental one, characterized by its circularity, flowery language and digressions, and the in-between Slavic style, which is linear in essence but allows a number of digressions, etc.

Culture determines the amount of information that may be revealed — from the Japanese minimum to the openness of the USA and Mexican texts.

2. Culture is also responsible for the issues taken up for discussion and the chosen view point. The best illustration to this is the old story about a mouse and a fly that sit discussing what an elephant is and can not come to an agreement as they view the animal from their respective view points.

3. Cultural bias is an issue that is hard to avoid, as it is next to impossible to find a person, able to simultaneously see and perceive the same object from the experience of many other humans. E.g. Rauni Rasanenan in his “Intercultural Education as Education for Global responsibility published in “Education for Global responsibility-Finnish Perspectives” (ed. by Taina Kaivola, Monika Melen-Paaso. Helsinki 2007 (p.27) says, that “Societies suffering from severe poverty and hunger cannot be considered as non-violent or peaceful”. It is hard to agree to the statement even from the historical point of view, as it is seldom the starving nations that start wars. When read by a Belarusian it feels almost an insult, as Belarusians, a not-so-rich nation, are a most peaceful people.

Bias is evident even in statistics’ analysis, e.g. a US analysis states that “Democracy is a prerequisite to high Sustainable Development Index”, and it is not supported by the SDI itself where old and reknown democracies come after some newer ones: Russia 33, USA 45, Belarus 47, Cuba 53, UK 65, Poland 102.

The following also contradicts the figures, “There is a close interrelation between mass poverty and the environment» (Indira Gandhi), cf. Uruguay 3, Sweden 4, India 101, Belgium 112.

The situation gets even more complicated when initial texts are translated into another language, as the culture of the translator (if not identical to that of the consumer) to some extent changes the original and influences the reader.

The best way out so far seems to be the production of texts according to strict structure and form rules by multi-national teams, e.g. UNO, UNESCO, etc.

However, culture surfaces immediately when these texts are further used by individuals. See, for example, “respect, value and preserve the achievements of the past», that the UNESCO document on “Objectives and strategies” of Education for sustainable development requires, interpreted by Michael Lunn (Australia-Ireland), “sustainability requires *NEW IDEAS*, technology, methods, mindsets, a new world».

Last in this paper but far from the last of the list is the trend to play the fashion card, like minorities, gender or AIDS issues are today. See how the same author speaks of minorities in complete discord with the official UNESCO documents, "...all the stakeholders must "also listen to the opinion of the minorities... =indigenous people, for instance" vs. "indigenous people have a particular role, having an intimate knowledge of the sustained use of their environments" (DESD Implementation Scheme).