Intercultural Communication Studies

A Special Issue on

Intercultural Communication Principles and Practice

Introduction

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The Sixth International Conference on Cross-Cultural Communication, held in Tempe, Arizona, 1997, produced many excellent programs and papers. Professors William G. Davey, Arizona State University, and L. Brooks Hill, Trinity University, the co-hosts of this biennial event, agreed to edit two special issues of "Intercultural Communication Studies" primarily devoted to selected papers from this conference. For Volume VIII, issue number 1, Fall 1998-99, Davey assembled a collection unified around the topic of "Language and Internationalism." For the current issue number 2, Spring 1998-99, Hill has synthesized a more diverse group under the title of "Intercultural Communication Principles and Practice." Such a broad title and the expansive breadth of these articles accentuates a major objective of the International Association for Intercultural Communication Studies (IAICS), the parent organization of this journal: to integrate scholars and scholarship from a wide diversity of disciplines concerned with the development of intercultural communication studies. The following introduction will anticipate how well this issue meets our organizational objective.

The fifteen articles of this issue are organized around five component themes emphasizing the workplace, intercultural competence, social problems, literary reflections, and other questions. This introduction will briefly identify the articles and their collective thematic integrity. In the first section, articles by Christian, Yamaguchi, and Larkey examine intercultural communication implications for the

workplace. Using discourse analysis, Christian compares French and American behaviors in business meetings to identify different intentions about the use of such meetings and the miscommunication which can emerge from these differences. Using a different methodology, Yamaguchi examines the behavior of USA, Australian and Japanese workers to locate work-related values, to correlate these with their national cultures, and to project the implications for intercultural communication effectiveness. Contrasting two orientations about diversity, Larkey examines their implications for interaction in diverse work groups and poses a "diversity rhetoric burnout" as a likely prospect of the persistent struggle between these different orientations in the USA.

The second group of articles raises several serious questions concerning the assessment and application of our thinking about intercultural communication competence. In the first of these articles Comadena, Kapoor, Konsky, and Blue study American and Asian Indian subjects to test and question the validity of the individualism-collectivism perspective as a measure of intercultural sensitivity. Focusing on the psychological dimension of communication competence, Eguchi recounts problems encountered by Japanese students learning English and recommends an alternative approach for English instruction. Addressing competence questions from a different vantage point, Kapoor, Konsky, and Blue test a values theory to determine interrelations among values of American high school and university students and how these patterns relate to the collectivism-individualism perspective and television consumption.

Three interesting case studies in the third section consider the applications of intercultural communication principles in dealing with social problems and issues. Shaver and Dixon construct a method from Umberto Eco's semiotic theory to examine the delivery of health care to American Indians by a large government organization and to pose several intercultural communication problems which this bureaucratic therapy elicits. Heisey, Zhen, and Jun describe a successful Chinese youth campaign to advance ecological goals and suggest some guidelines for effective social movements in the Peoples' Republic of China. Elerick explains a special educational use of the internet to foster interaction between students in Singapore and the USA and indicates a pattern which could help more students realize the advantages of intercultural contact through such simulated exchange programs.

The three articles of the fourth section use literary artifacts as their primary source of data to project several implications for intercultural communication study and practice. Williams discusses the widely varied conceptions of subcultures, identifies a rural-urban conceptualization clearly reflected in recent Chinese literature, and provides an alternative perspective on subcultural relations. Lu employs the work of Kenneth Burke to locate the rhetorical strategies and tactics employed in *China Can Say No* and indicates the consequent threats for international relations between the USA and the PRC. Examining Japanese and American newspaper reports from their discourse representations, Yamashita reveals significantly different patterns of news reporting and projects some implications for intercultural misunderstanding.

The final section provides fascinating extensions of our usual perspectives on intercultural communication. In the first of these three articles, Takeshita uses a variant of word association methodology to locate different images of each other's culture among Japanese and Thai subjects and to project some implications for more effective intercultural communication. Rakusan compares Czech and English similes and metaphors regarding animals and cultural themes to predict some obstacles to translation and other intercultural communication problems. Using the perplexing issues of abortion in the USA as a backdrop, von Raffler-Engel extends her earlier work and examines the variability of perceptions about the unborn human among diverse subcultures and the curious political implications of these differences.

Overall, the fifteen articles of this issue raise a wide diversity of questions about the principles and practice of intercultural communication. With this variety we can all be proud of the IAICS and its increasing ability to draw so many people from such a variety of scholarly perspectives to our joint concerns with intercultural communication. I invite readers to examine each of these articles, prepare your reactions, and join us for our next conference in Louisville, Kentucky, July 28-31,1999. Meanwhile please consider the many possibilities for your own work stimulated by the scholars and scholarship in this issue.