Anxiety/Uncertainty Management (AUM) Theory: A Critical Examination of an Intercultural Communication Theory

Masaki Yoshitake

University of Oklahoma

Abstract

The paper critically examines the Anxiety/Uncertainty Management (AUM) Theory, developed mainly by William Gudykunst, as one of the major intercultural communication theories. First, the key concepts of the theory are briefly identified. Second, the history of its development within the field is depicted. Third, critical analysis is conducted on the AUM theory. Through this examination, it is revealed that the theory (1) limits its focus to the effectiveness of communication, (2) excessively relies on consciousness, and (3) entails Western-cultural biases that celebrate individualistic cultures and that devalue high uncertainty avoidance cultures. Fourth, meta-theoretical critique is conducted to explicate the potential assumptions of the social scientific paradigm that cause the problems residing in the AUM theory. These problems are: (1) pursuit of effectiveness and efficiency as a modernistic value, (2) abandonment of "otherness," (3) Cartesian principles of theories, and (4) fallacy of value-neutral theories. The paper concludes with a brief methodological discussion.

The academic field of intercultural communication (ICC) is in crisis. Casmir (1998), one of the contributors to the development of the ICC field, laments underlying problems in the field. He critically illustrates:

> The negative aspects of [the] developments of intercultural relations study are directly related to the prominence of "academic turf" and the academic "reward system." By that I mean that integrative or cooperative efforts are rare, leading to duplication, "re-inventing the wheel" over and over again, and little agreement on what the needs of society and our world are. (paragraph 6)

Casmir's use of the terms "academic turf" and "academic reward system" captures where ICC scholars are trapped. Through his paper, Casmir implies that if we did not reflect upon ourselves and rigorously adhere to the above-

mentioned attitudes, the ICC field would disappear because of its amateurism and lack of returning profit to society.

Despite the aforementioned problems, there are some ongoing movements to rectify and reinvigorate the field among ICC scholars. For instance, Martin and Nakayama (1999, 2000) and Martin, Nakayama, and Floris (1998) suggested "the dialectical approach," in which three possible approaches to ICC studies were paralleled in a dialectical order: social scientific, interpretive, and critical approaches. No doubt, the celebration of such methodological pluralism is a great benefit to the field. However, simply paralleling multiple approaches is still within scientism and does not reflect the essential ideas of multiple approaches, which will be discussed in conclusion.

In order to inspect the suggested problems of the ICC studies more profoundly, this paper aims at two things. The first aim is to critically examine one of the predominant theories in the ICC field, namely The Anxiety/Uncertainty Management (AUM) theory. This theory was constructed mainly by William B. Gudykunst, who has been most frequently cited in the *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* (Hart, 1999). The second aim is to extend the discussion to the general critique of the paradigms in the ICC field. By the end of this paper, it should be clear that problems of AUM theory originate in those of the field as a whole. The present paper consists of four parts: (1) review of AUM theory, (2) historical description of AUM theory, (3) critique of AUM theory, and (4) critique of the meta-theoretical assumptions behind the current ICC studies.

Major Elements of AUM Theory

To begin, I will describe major elements of AUM theory. According to the 1995 version of AUM theory (Gudykunst, 1995), the theory aims at enhancing one's effective communication by reducing the amount of uncertainty and anxiety to moderate levels mediated by mindfulness. Integrating Simmel's concept of "stranger," the AUM theory explains communication at both interpersonal and intergroup levels with psychological focus. Illustrated below are the essential constructs of the AUM theory: effective communication, uncertainty, anxiety, and mindfulness.

Key Constructs: Effective Communication, Uncertainty, Anxiety, and Mindfulness

Effective communication is the domain for explanation and the primary goal of AUM theory. Gudykunst regards communication as a "process" of exchanging messages and creating meaning, rather than "outcome." Meaning cannot be transferred, only message can be. Taking these assumptions into account, communication is effective "to the extent that the person interpreting the message attaches a meaning to the message that is relatively similar to what

was intended by the person transmitting it" (Gudykunst, 1995, p. 15). In other words, effective communication is a process of isomorphic attributions.

Uncertainty and anxiety are two elements that, managed well, lead to effective communication. Consistent with Berger and Calabrese's (1975) use of the term, <u>uncertainty</u> is a cognitive phenomenon and defined as "inability to predict and explain our own and others' behavior" (Gudykunst, 1993, p. 39). While uncertainty is a cognitive phenomenon, <u>anxiety</u> is an affective equivalent, regarded as "one of the fundamental problems" with which all individuals have to deal. There are maximum and minimum thresholds for uncertainty and anxiety so that one can predict and explain his or her own behaviors and that of others more accurately and can maintain enough motivation to communicate with strangers.

The other key concept is <u>mindfulness</u>. Effective communication is facilitated by managing uncertainty and anxiety at an appropriate level. However, it is necessary to be highly aware of one's own behavior. This mindset is called "being mindful," which enables us to manipulate the levels of uncertainty and anxiety at a conscious level. Gudykunst believes that we follow our own implicit rules when we communicate in mindless and automatic ways. That is, communicating with strangers requires us to be mindful so that we pay more attention to our own scripts of communication as well as those of strangers.

In sum, excellent management of the increase or decrease of the levels of anxiety and/or uncertainty leads to effective communication, which means attaching the closest meaning to the message sent by the sender. Mindfulness plays an important role in managing uncertainty and anxiety in the process.

Axioms and Cultural Variability

By examining the concepts identified above, Gudykunst constructs a number of axioms in order to make connections among the concepts. There are two phases in constructing axioms. In the first phase, 47 axioms are created based on the norms and tendencies within the United States. They are stated in the logical-positivistic way in that one variable causes another. In the second phase, these 47 US-version axioms are extended in the "intercultural" contexts, based on the assumption that management of anxiety and uncertainty is a universal phenomenon. Specifically, incorporating Hofstede's four cultural variabilities (i.e., individualism, uncertainty avoidance, power distance, and masculinity/femininity), another 47 axioms are added and the total number of axioms reaches 94. The axioms in the second phase are stated in such a way that the increase and decrease of two variables are interrelated rather than one variable causing another, due to Gudykunst's belief that the cause-effect relationship attributed to culture cannot be tested.

In this first section, I delineated the essential concepts of AUM theory and the axiom construction process (see Gudykunst 1995 for more details). In the

next section, I will attempt to locate AUM theory in the historical context of the development of ICC studies.

Historical Background of AUM Theory and ICC Studies

In his sociology of knowledge, Mannheim (1936) emphasizes the importance of historical contexts to understand generated knowledge. Mannheim asserts, "the sociology of knowledge seeks to comprehend thought in the concrete setting of an historical-social situation out of which individually differentiated thought only very gradually emerges" (p. 3). Consistent with Mannheim's insight, this section briefly examines the historical aspect of the process of constructing the AUM theory and situates it in the context of the development of the ICC studies.

When Gudykunst appeared in the arena of ICC studies (e.g., in Hammer, Gudykunst, Wiseman, 1978, to which his interest in effectiveness can be traced back), the field was at the stage of sensitizing or highlighting some important aspects of ICC in isolation (Gudykunst, 1983a). The focus was on how people are influenced by norms and values and how they communicate, most typically as observed in Condon and Yousef (1975). In 1983, Gudykunst edited *The International and Intercultural Communication Annual* (Volume 7), in which he devoted himself to proposing a direction of systematic inquiry on ICC. As Gudykunst (1983a) explains, "the major problem with the utilization of such a [sensitized] concept (e.g., value orientations, assumptions, sets of expectations) is that they are often discussed in isolation and never directly related to the process of communication" (p. 13). In other words, this was the beginning of the logical-positivist empire era in the ICC studies.

In attempting to theorize ICC, Gudykunst (1983a) presents three possible approaches: develop its own approach, borrow from other disciplines, and modify theories from other communication fields. Gudykunst himself relies significantly on interpersonal communication (IPC) theories, such as uncertainty reduction theory and social penetration theory. As a result, ICC studies focused on interpersonal aspects and culture began to be treated as a variable. Consistently, in the first half of the 80s, Gudykunst conducted a series of cultural comparisons in which uncertainty reduction theory and social penetration theory were applied in intercultural settings (e.g., Gudykunst, 1985a, 1985b, 1985c, 1983b; Gudykunst, Chua, & Gray, 1987; Gudykunst & Nishida, 1983, 1984; Gudykunst, Yang, & Nishida, 1985). By focusing on the uncertainty dimension, Gudykunst (1988) first integrated the concept of anxiety and presented 13 axioms in the article.

Focusing on ICC competence, Gudykunst's continuous work on uncertainty and anxiety finally reached one integrated version, named Anxiety/Uncertainty Management Theory (Gudykunst, 1993). In this theorizing process, Gudykunst established the basic framework of today's version of AUM theory, where the

number of the axioms increased to 39. Moreover, 10 more axioms were added by integrating Hofstede's cultural variability variables and two personal-level variables, i.e., idiocentrism-allocentrism and egalitarianism.

AUM theory has made progress as a nearly complete theory with 94 axioms (Gudykunst, 1995). In 1988, then, Gudykunst attempted to apply the theory to intercultural adjustment training (see Gudykunst & Hammer, 1998, for the application of uncertainty reduction theory to intercultural settings). The presented schedule of intercultural adjustment training consists of seven-day sessions: e.g., cultural general simulations; learning on mindfulness, anxiety, uncertainty, and cultural variabilities; their application to actual interactions with hosts; and learning such survival skills as how to use the local transportation systems.

It has been illustrated so far that AUM theory was constructed in the shift from the emergence of ICC studies to its scientific inquiry. Gudykunst himself was one of the contributors who made ICC a field of study. In this sense, AUM theory can be an outcome of the history of ICC. In the next section, I will move to the critique of the theory.

Critique of AUM theory

I have overviewed AUM theory and situated it in the historical context. Now I would like to turn my attention to its potential problems. I admit that AUM theory discusses essential issues in human communication, especially in intercultural settings where more uncertainty and anxiety are experienced. However, the theory also possesses some problems and has been challenged by some scholars. In the remaining part of the paper, I will delineate these problems residing in the AUM theory. First, I will refer to critiques made by Griffin (1997) and Ting-Toomey (1989). Second, I will move on to my own critique of the theory.

Critiques by Griffin and Ting-Toomey

To begin with, I will introduce critiques by Griffin (1997) and Ting-Toomey (1989). In order to identify weaknesses of the AUM theory, Griffin criticizes the complexity of the AUM theory. Griffin mentions, "hypothetically, the 47 axioms could spawn over a thousand theorems" (p. 416). As described before, AUM theory consists of 94 axioms at this point, including the combination of cultural variability. Griffin, therefore, further points out the danger of the possible expansion of the axioms whenever more cultural variability is incorporated and indicates the possibility that it causes more complication and confusion.

Ting-Toomey (1989), focusing more on content, rather than form as Griffin does, exhibits five conceptual issues regarding the uncertainty reduction theory as well as the social penetration theory: (1) the need for motivational factors and other variables of the host side that influence the uncertainty reduction process;

(2) the lack of attention to relational changes; (3) the necessity of actual research on dyadic effect of reciprocity; (4) the inevitability of integration of more contextual dimensions into the theories and research; and (5) Western-based ideologies residing in the concept of intimacy. The fifth point refers to Kincaid's analysis on ideological dimensions of intimacy. Kincaid asserts that "the themes of control and openness .… are highly valued by Western, individualistic cultures but not necessarily by Eastern collectivist cultures" (p. 379). With these five critiques, Ting-Toomey seems to ask for further revisions of the theories.

I agree with both Griffin and Ting-Toomey. However, I will argue that the AUM theory holds more fundamental problems in explaining intercultural communication phenomena, which should be re-examined from a broader perspective. The points I will discuss are: (1) limited focus on effective communication; (2) excessive reliance on consciousness; and (3) Western-biased axiom construction.

Limited Focus: Effective Communication

The AUM theory aims at effective communication as the primary construct. Gudykunst maintains that effective communication is to attach the closest meaning to incoming messages in the way the sender intended. It is believed that this isomorphic attribution will make it possible to minimize misunderstanding. Regarding this thesis, problems reside at two levels: (1) the definition of effective communication and (2) effective communication as the goal of ICC.

Problem of the definition of effective communication. Humans communicate for a variety of purposes, e.g., to ask for help to accomplish tasks, to build relationships, or to make excuses. However, a question is: Whether the attribution of the closest meaning is necessary, or even possible, in such various communication situations. Let us consider the conditions in which such isomorphic attribution stands. First, message, sender, and receiver need to be separate entities, where messages transfer from sender to receiver. Then, a message has to carry an intended meaning with which an attributed meaning can be compared. It is with both conditions that we can state that a speaker sends a message with a certain intention and that a listener receives it and makes the best guess as to its meaning.

Regarding the first condition, the separation among message, sender, and receiver is quite artificial. According to this condition, messages always need to be "sent by a sender." Whether messages are sent to them or not, however, all individuals continuously create meanings in themselves. On some occasions, even speakers themselves are perceived as messages if listeners create messages from a speaker's presence. In this sense, messages are not "transferred" from someone; rather, they "emerge" within him or her as a form of "message."

Accordingly, the second condition that presupposes the existence of intended meaning becomes obscure now that the concepts of message, sender, and receiver are seen as ambiguous. Indeed, verbal communication in face-to-

face situations might allow easy identification of what is called intention in an utterance. However, nonverbal communication is much more difficult to attach a clear meaning to, because mostly it is unintentional. If so, what is the intended meaning of such an "unintended" nonverbal message? When A shows a strange smile to B without A's intention and B attaches a certain meaning, with what meaning can B's attached meaning be compared?

In total, to view effective communication as attribution of the closest meaning to the intended meaning reduces communication to a linear and mechanical activity where messages are transferred from sender to receiver. In other words, such a view is actually a metaphor that formulates a mechanical image of communication. Moreover, intended meanings cannot be always presupposed. The AUM theory explains only a mechanical aspect of communication, especially where intentions of people are relatively easy to identify.

Problem of effective communication as a goal of ICC. According to Gudykunst, the goal of effective communication is to minimize miscommunication. This view of communication is extremely mechanical with less emotional attachment, treating pure communication without misattribution as ideal. Due to placement of high priority on efficiency, culture is regarded simply as "noise" that interrupts the smooth transition of communication, idealizing purely IPC.

This problem-oriented view of culture has become salient since IPC models were highly appreciated in ICC studies. Indeed, its integration has expanded ICC studies and enabled them to be a branch of communication studies as the coherent body. Nevertheless, highlighting "interpersonal" aspects of ICC and devaluing "cultural" aspects reduces the practicality of ICC studies and abandons the appreciation of different cultures. Additionally, culture becomes a mere variable that influences IPC process or the degree of "interculturalness" (Saubaugh, 1970) in interpersonal encounters. This shift of attention results in emphasizing universal dimensions of the process and neglecting differences between cultures from which human beings create meaning and learn something.

My critique of viewing culture as noise is consistent with Shuter's critique of the current ICC research. Shuter (1990) laments the disrespect of culture in the ICC studies, stating:

> ... researchers in communication who conduct intercultural research do not generally exhibit … a passion for culture, an interest in descriptive research, or a desire to generate intracultural theories of communication. ... Instead much [of the research] is conducted to refine existing communication theories: culture serves principally as a research laboratory for testing the validity of communication paradigms. (pp. 237-238)

It is Shuter's argument that ICC researchers now need to "develop a research direction and teaching agenda that returns culture to preeminence and reflects the roots of the field" (p. 238).

AUM theory is a product of the intergroup-focused approach on the basis of the interpersonal model of uncertainty and anxiety reduction. In this line of thought, human communication becomes individual-goal oriented in that cultures are simply factors that intervene between smooth accomplishment and manipulation in attributing the closest meaning. In other words, cultural differences between conversants are treated as "problems" that two individuals mutually need to overcome. Unless differences among existing cultures are appreciated, it is never possible to establish mutual understandings and positive relationships.

Excessive Reliance on Consciousness

One of the prominent features of AUM theory is the use of mindfulness in managing uncertainty and anxiety, which operates at a highly conscious level. Although humans need to be conscious and to manage anxiety and uncertainty mindfully in certain occasions, excessive reliance on consciousness makes it difficult to explain contexts in which emotion and irrationality override consciousness and void rational explanations. For instance, the AUM theory might be applicable to those from a culture high in affective neutrality, but not to those from a culture high in affectivity. Such contradictions between one's consciousness and emotion occur at a personal level as well as a cultural level.

Because of the emphasis on conscious states, the AUM theory even reduces "empathy" to a cognitive entity in that Gudykunst (1995) views empathy as something one can "use." He states that "the use of empathy . . . increases the likelihood that understanding occurs" (p. 27). Here empathy is dissociated from one's emotional state. This view fails to illuminate empathetic communication, in which empathy "concerns allocentric thought, positive regard, and sensitive and caring behaviors" (Bruneau, 1998, p. 8). In this thought, empathy is not something to use: Rather, it is something that emerges inside.

In applying AUM theory to intercultural adjustment training, Gudykunst (1998) also heavily relies on the role of consciousness, in the use of lectures and practices that aim at developing trainees' knowledge. Session two, for instance, deals with mindfulness through a short lecture and the use of "critical incidents" (see Cushner & Brislin, 1996). The use of critical incidents is observed also in the third session on managing anxiety, after the "lectures" on bodily symptoms, worrying thoughts, and cognitive distortion. Even anxiety as an affective dimension is believed to develop mainly by "knowing" symptoms and how to deal with them cognitively.

Western-Biased Axiom Construction

Assuming the universality of anxiety and uncertainty reduction in communication, Gudykunst directly applies cultural variabilities to the U.S.

domestic axioms to extend the theory to intercultural contexts. However, the axioms constructed in such a procedure contain ethnocentric judgments of different cultures. The following simple content analysis reveals Anglocentric and ideological assumptions underlying AUM theory.

The analysis was executed as follows. In the first step, the first 47 axioms were examined in such a way that an axiom indicating "increase" in anxiety or uncertainty is coded as "negative" and vice versa, based on the fact that the theory focuses on their "reduction" in communication. In the second step, another set of 47 axioms corresponding to the domestic axioms is coded in the same way. For instance, Axiom 16 states "an <u>increase</u> in our ability to empathize with strangers [positive] will produce an <u>increase</u> in our ability to accurately predict their behavior [positive]" and the corresponding Axiom 63 states "an <u>increase</u> in collectivism will be associated with a <u>decrease</u> in the ability to empathize with strangers [negative]" (emphasis added). The logic is: If <u>more collectivism attributes</u> are identified, then ability to empathize <u>decreases</u>, which leads to a <u>decrease</u> in the ability to accurately predict, which is coded as "negative." In other words, collectivism implies a negative value according to these two axioms. All the 47 combinations were coded and the number of positive and negative values in cultural variability variables was counted.

The result reported unjustified favoritism towards the axioms related to individualism-collectivism and uncertainty avoidance variables. In individualism, 16 axioms were identified as positive and only one negative, while in the collectivism variables, eight were positive and six negative. Obviously, individualism is evaluated favorably according to this distribution. In high uncertainty avoidance, only one axiom was positive and 10 axioms were negative. This analysis also delineates that high uncertainty avoidance seems to be regarded as negative and low uncertainty avoidance as positive.

The two aforementioned results lead to the underlying theme of AUM theory: <u>Cultures low in uncertainty avoidance and high in individualism tend to be able to possess more ability to manage anxiety and to accurately predict and explain, therefore leading to more effective communication.</u> No doubt, the United States represents a culture relatively low in uncertainty avoidance and high in individualism, while Japan, for example, is depicted as extremely high in uncertainty avoidance and relatively low in individualism. So the AUM theory presumably suggests that Americans potentially communicate more effectively than, e.g., the Japanese.

The content analysis uncovers the fact that cultural values of communication typical in the US are reflected in AUM theory. This indicates that Gudykunst regards such communication patterns as universal and suggests that other cultures follow American patterns. Unfortunately, this unwritten message is actively supported and consumed by his associates, say, from other Asian cultures such as Japan, Korea, and China. The danger of AUM theory is

that the above-described structure imposes the American mode of communication on collectivistic, high uncertainty avoidance cultures and encourages Americanized scholars from other cultures to employ it blindly.

In critiquing AUM theory as one predominant ICC theory, I made three arguments: the theory limits its focus to effective communication; it excessively relies on consciousness in the theory; and it contains Western-biased axioms. It is true that these critiques articulate potential problems residing in the AUM theory. Nevertheless, these problems are, in fact, not specific to the AUM theory. In the next section, I will deepen these critiques at the meta-theoretical level.

Meta-Theoretical Critique of the Current ICC Studies

The critiques seemingly specific to AUM theory represent more general problems in current ICC studies. In order to complete the critique of the theory, it is inevitable to critique such meta-theoretical assumptions. In the rest of the paper, I aim to clarify these meta-theoretical problems in the ICC theories and research, without doubt represented by the AUM theory.

Pursuit of Effectiveness/Efficiency

The emphasis on effectiveness, the first critique of the theory, reflects a modernistic value. Since the industrial revolution in the 18th century, social structures have been dramatically changing to modern ones. During this modernization, production processes needed to be effective and efficient so that outcomes and profits could be maximized. The "monochronic" concept of time (Hall, 1976) represents such modernistic values. In monochronic cultures, time is divided into pieces, an arrangement reflected, as Hall describes, in the life of factory workers. Time schedules, actions, and communication require punctuality so that effectiveness and efficiency are enhanced.

No doubt ICC requires effectiveness and efficiency to a certain degree to achieve one's purposes. However, effectiveness and efficiency are merely part of a bigger picture. Pursuing effectiveness and efficiency does not consider the fact that ICC encounters can be opportunities for learning, self-reflecting, and expanding one's views, though such communication processes require more patience, attention, and effort. Avoiding such "troubles" and pursuing efficiency render communication to profit-oriented acts, which are egoistic and individualistic.

Abandonment of Otherness

In the AUM theory, culture becomes noise or a mere variable that interferes in anxiety and uncertainty reduction processes. In this view, IPC is contrasted to ICC and idealized as having less noise and more effectiveness. Emphasizing the relative purity of IPC (at least compared to ICC) also deifies efficiency, again reflecting modernistic values.

It is questionable, however, whether IPC is really a pure form of communication. Indeed, it is difficult to decipher what is in the mind of

186

someone from another culture. Then, is it even possible to decipher that of someone in the same culture? In fact, even such universal matters as pain, happiness, or surprise are impossible to experience exactly in the same way others do. An important fact is: Pure communication never exists in the first place. No communication, even interpersonal within the same culture, can avoid the impossibility of experiencing and understanding what others experience and understand in exactly the same way. In nature, there is ever-present "otherness" in communication.

German philosopher Martin Buber (1958) considers otherness in communication by articulating the dialogical "I-thou" relation in humans. In such a relationship, communication takes place between two "subjects" (an autonomous "I" communicates with an autonomous "thou"). The relationship between I and thou, therefore, allows intersubjective reality. On the contrary, communication based on the modernistic view rather treats one's interlocutor as "thing," not "thou." What is perceived or received is mere "message" and meaning-attribution processes are one's egoistic activities, in which there is no room for integration of the "realities" of other people.

In total, otherness is the nature of communication and human relations. The purification of IPC, contrasted with intercultural or intergroup communication, results from the mechanical metaphor of communication. Theories that neglect this human nature are simply caught up in the ideological view of modernism, in which effectiveness and mechanical communication are deified. Actually, such a view is the very product of Cartesian thought that separates one's own indubitable mind from other materials, including one's body, as is explained next.

Cartesian Principles of Theories

French philosopher Descartes separates mind from extended body and reaches the principle: I think, therefore I am. By this principle, Descartes (1) argues for the existence of an absolute "I" that is indubitable and (2) displays loyalty to conscious states within oneself. Regarding the first point, the existence of an absolute "I" leads to the abandonment of otherness, as pointed above, by negating relationship essential in communication and identity. Moreover, the second principle, which emphasizes the role of consciousness, does not account for situations in which emotion overrides consciousness. The articulation of mindful or conscious processes of managing anxiety and uncertainty in the theory in fact originates in Cartesian principles.

The second point emerges also in the theory construction process of the AUM theory. Because of the dominance of logical positivism in the social scientific paradigm in ICC studies, a number of theories are expressed in an axiomatic manner. Axiom-based theories are influenced by the Cartesian view in that axioms are logically and rationally constructed based on the mathematical model of logic. Undeniably, human life often demands thinking

187

logically and acting rationally; nonetheless, social phenomena cannot always be logically and rationally explained.

There always exist two forces in the world: cosmos versus chaos. While cosmos is an Apollonian force that provides "order," chaos is a Dionysian force that destroys integrative moves. It is significant, then, to realize that logic is the very product of an Apollonian force. It is part of human nature to be motivated to assemble chaotic worlds in a coherent way. It is also our nature, however, to possess emotion, identify beauty in non-logical arts, use imagination in thinking, or destroy things to create energy for change. Without accounting for such an unspoken side of humanity, ICC becomes ideological in a Cartesian way.

Logos and emotion, rationality and non/irrationality, as well as consciousness and unconsciousness, are all part of human nature. Adhering to logical and rational explanations bounded by axioms is a discourse that promotes a certain way of viewing phenomena. For theory and theorizing are value-laden, as explained below.

Fallacy of Value-Neutral Theories

Theories tend to be viewed as something that "explains" phenomena. As far as theories are "narrated" by scholars, nevertheless, they are also products of communication and, thus, theorization is also a communicative activity. Such a "social" aspect of theorization suggests that theories are not merely "descriptive" but "performative." In his Speech Act Theory, Austin (1962) categorizes utterance into three acts: a locutionary act (i.e., an act of saying something); an illocutionary act (i.e., in saying what a person does); and a perlocutionary act (i.e., by saying what a person does). By abandoning the idea of pure descriptions of situations and reports of facts, Austin urges that speech rather "does" things and that uttering something performs a certain act as we do things in different ways. Particularly because the AUM theory contains Western-cultural biases as explicated earlier, explaining communication in terms of the AUM theory "persuades" us to see communication in such a way. Without recognizing this performative aspect of theory, theorizing is regarded as no more than a mere "explanation." In the sense that regarding theorization and theory as separate from ordinary communication and message accompanies a certain degree of artificiality, theories are not value-neutral but, rather, value-laden. Habermas (1987) warns that system is supposed to "serve" lifeworld (our inner life experience) but now is conquering lifeworld. As logic entails an Apollonian force that gives order to chaos, generation of knowledge in research activities also belong to cosmos. Habermas's warning keenly explicates the
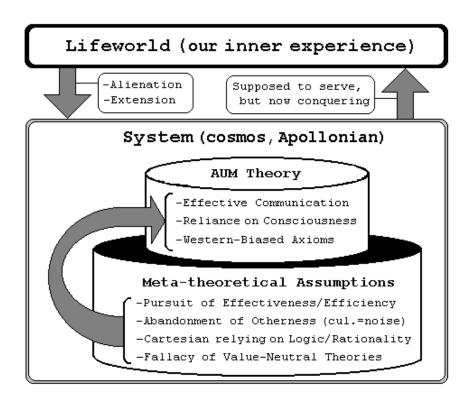
Figure 1: Summary of the Critiques in the System-Lifeworld Context

relationship between research as systematic activities and humans living in lifeworld. It also illustrates the alienation process in which knowledge, including theories (originally extended from our consciousness), controls us in turn. Recognizing such relationship and alienation, theory plays active roles within a society.

In this section, I made a general critique of the paradigm of current ICC studies. Among the four points, the last one on value-neutrality makes it possible to situate the critiques conducted in this paper in the context of the relationship between system and lifeworld. All the critiques, both specific and general, are illustrated in Figure 1.

Conclusion

The current paper critically examines the Anxiety/Uncertainty Management theory as one of the most dominant ICC theories. After describing the AUM theory and its historical development, I attempt to critique the AUM theory and

identify its limitations, including its narrow focus on effectiveness, overemphasis on consciousness, and its inclusion of Western-cultural biases. Furthermore, it is made clear that these problems originate in the paradigm predominant in the current ICC field. Four points are delineated through the meta-theoretical critique of the paradigm: pursuit of effectiveness and efficiency, abandonment of otherness, Cartesian principles of theories, and the fallacy of value-neutral theories.

In the history of the ICC field, scholars including Gudykunst made great efforts to overcome the problem of cultural relativism and to make ICC a field of study. Reflecting the excessive emphasis on scientism that followed, Martin and Nakayama (2000) propose the dialectical approach. Their proposal is still within the worldview of scientism, nevertheless, because they only appreciate the "instrumental" aspect of methodology without solving potential philosophical disagreements regarding its ontology, epistemology, and axiology. For instance, the critical approach inspects reflections of ideology and power dimension on the theorizing process. This assumption directly opposes the objectivity assumption of the social scientific approach. If the critical approach were correctly integrated in ICC studies, each approach would not be interpreted as a "collection" of different tools. Rather, each approach, whether social scientific, interpretive, or critical, would involve philosophy.

It is the aim of this paper to show that current ICC studies are still possessed by the scientific tradition, even given the emphasis on methodological pluralism. It is not until science is recognized as a mere "discourse" that the interpretive and critical approaches can be emancipated from the imposition of the scientific worldview under the name of methodological pluralism. It is my hope that ICC scholars will find a way to reflect each ontological, epistemological, and axiological assumption accompanying each methodology without being caught up in the social scientific paradigm.

References

Austin, J. L.
  1962   *How to do things with words*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University
            Press.
Berger, C. R., & Calabrese, R.
  1975   Some explorations in initial interactions and beyond. *Human
            Communication Research, 1*, 99-112.

Bruneau, T.
  1998 June   Intercultural communication competency and empathy: A
               reconceptualization and future directions. Paper presented at the
               annual meeting of the Communication Association of Japan, Tokyo,
               Japan.
Buber, M.
  1958   *I and thou*, 2nd edition (R.G. Smith, Trans.). New York: Charles
               Scribner's Sons.
Casmir, F. L.
  1998 Fall   On the past and future of intercultural relations study: An
               interview with Fred L. Casmir. W. Hart, interviewer. In *The Edge:
               The E-Journal of Intercultural Relations* [On-line serial], *1*(4).
               Available: http: Hostname: <www.hartli.com> Directory: biz/
               thedge. File: intvcsmr.htm.
Condon, J. C., & Yousef, F. S.
  1975   *An introduction to intercultural communication.* Indianapolis, IN:
               Bobbs-Merrill.
Cushner, K., & Brislin, R. W.
  1996   *Intercultural interactions: A practical guide,* 2nd ed. Thousands
               Oaks, CA: Sage.
Griffin, E.
  1997   *A first look at communication theory,* 3rd edition. New York:
               McGraw-Hill.
Gudykunst, W. B.
  1983a   Theorizing in intercultural communication: An introduction. In W.
               B. Gudykunst (Ed.), *Intercultural communication theory* (pp. 13-20).
               Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
  1983b   Uncertainty reduction and predictability of behavior in low- and
               high-context cultures: An exploratory study. *Communication
               Quarterly, 3 1*, 49-55.
  1985a   An exploratory comparison of close intercultural and intercultural
               friendships. *Communication Quarterly, 33*, 270-283.
  1985b   A model of uncertainty reduction in intercultural encounters.
               Journal of Language and Social Psychology, 4, 79-98.
  1985c   The influence of cultural similarity, type of relationship, and self-
               monitoring on uncertainty reduction processes. *Communication
               Monographs, 52*, 203-217.
  1988   Uncertainty and anxiety. In Y. Y. Kim & W. B. Gudykunst (Eds.),
               Theories in intercultural communication (pp. 123-156). Newbury
               Park, CA: Sage.
  1993   Toward a theory of effective interpersonal and intergroup
               communication: An anxiety/uncertainty management (AUM)

perspective. In R. L. Wiseman & J. Koester (Eds.), *Intercultural communication competence* (pp. 33-71). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

1995   Anxiety/Uncertainty Management (AUM) theory: Current status. In R. L. Wiseman (Ed.), *Intercultural communication theory* (pp. 8-58). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

1998   Applying anxiety/uncertainty management (AUM) theory to intercultural adjustment training. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, *22*, 227-250.

Gudykunst, W. B., & Hammer, M. R.

1988   Strangers and hosts: An uncertainty reduction based theory of intercultural adaptation. In Y. Y. Kim & W. B. Gudykunst (Eds.), *Cross-cultural adaptation: Current approaches* (pp. 106-139). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Gudykunst, W. B., Chua, E., & Gray, A. J.

1987   Cultural dissimilarities and uncertain reduction processes. In M. McLaughlin (Ed.), *Communication yearbook, 10*, (pp. 456-469). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Gudykunst, W. B., & Nishida, T.

1983   Social penetration in Japanese and American close friendships. In B. Robertson (Ed.), *Communication yearbook, 7* (pp. 592-610). Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

1984   Individual and cultural influences on uncertainty reduction. *Communication Monographs, 51*, 23-36.

Gudykunst, W. B., Yang, S. M., & Nishida, T.

1985   A cross-cultural test of uncertainty reduction theory: Comparisons of acquaintances, friends, and dating relationships in Japan, Korea, and the United States. *Human Communication Research, 3*, 407-455.

Habermas, J.

1987   *The theory of communicative action. Volume 2. Lifeworld and system: A critique of functionalist reason.* (T. McCarthy, Trans.). Boston: Beacon Press.

Hall, E. T.

1976   *Beyond culture*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday.

Hammer, M., Gudykunst, W. B., & Wiseman, R. L.

1978   Dimensions of intercultural effectiveness: An exploratory study. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 2*, 382-393.

Hart, W.

1999   Interdisciplinary influences in the study of intercultural relations: A citation analysis of the International Journal of Intercultural Relations. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 23*, 575-589.

Hofstede, G.

1984   *Culture's consequences: International differences in work-related values.* Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Kincaid, D. (Ed.)
1987   *Communication theory from Eastern and Western perspectives.* New York: Academic Press.

Mannheim, K.
1936   *Ideology & Utopia: A introduction to the sociology of knowledge* (L. Wirth & E. Shils, Trans.). San Diego, CA: A Harvest Book.

Martin, J. N., & Nakayama, T. K.
1999   Thinking dialectically about culture and communication. *Communication Theory, 9,* 1-25.
2000   *Intercultural communication in context*, 2nd ed. Mountain View, CA: Mayfield Publishing.

Martin, J. N., Nakayama, T. K., & Flores, L. A.
1998   A dialectical approach to intercultural communication. In J. N. Martin, T. K. Nakayama, & L. A. Flores (Eds.), *Readings in cultural contexts*. Mountain View, CA: Mayfield Publishing.

Saubaugh, L. E.
1979   *Intercultural communication.* Rochelle Park, NJ: Hayden.

Shuter, R.
1990   The centrality of culture. *The Southern Communication Journal, 55,* 237-249.

Ting-Toomey, S.
1989   Culture and interpersonal relationship development: Some conceptual issues. In J. A. Anderson (Ed.), *Communication yearbook 12* (pp. 371-382). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.