Intercultural Communication and Globalization

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I would like to thank the Organising Committee and its Executive Chairman, Professor Zi-yu Lin for the kind invitation to address you all in this plenary presentation. Mine is the last plenary keynote presentation, so I will try also to summarize some of my impressions from these two wonderful days we have spent together here in Macau. With its rich history and many layers of culture, Macau is an appropriate setting for this joint conference arranged by The International Conference on English, Discourse and Intercultural Communication (EDIC) and the International Association for Intercultural Communication Studies (IAICS). Our organizations have several common features and interests. In this plenary presentation, I would primarily like to share with you some reflections from my introduction to *Intercultural Communication Studies* 2016 (25) 1, which was published about one year ago.

This special edition of which I was issue editor, was entitled "Communication Across Cultures, Time and Space. A Festschrift in Honor of Professor Robert N. St. Clair, President, IAICS 2013-15." It contains 16 articles by 24 authors, all paying tribute to Professor St. Clair for his long and dedicated service to IAICS. Among the many excellent articles, let me mention just 3: Professor Guo-Ming Chen contributed an article entitled "Zhong (Centrality), Self Competence and Social as well as Communication Competence: A Chinese Perspective"; Professor Mao Sihui wrote an article on "A Fabulous Speck: Oriental Imaginaries of Macao as the Veiled Other" (which is a wonderful and highly appropriate text for this conference) and Professor Joanna Radwańska-Williams contributed an article on "Iconicity in Pushkin's poem *Winter Evening";* she also wrote a very touching preface as ICS editor, which I know professor St. Clair appreciated. Unfortunately, his health does not permit him to join us but he has asked me to convey his greetings to all of you.

My introductory article was intended to provide context for all the articles and link them with the authorship of Professor St. Clair. In particular, I explored the concepts of culture and globalization, noting some of the enrichments and challenges that can arise through cultural encounters. Coming to Macao, I decided that this might also be appropriate as part of a final plenary presentation.

Today, we see that despite some setbacks, the process of globalization is increasing, as the IAICS conference theme suggests: *Languages and Cultures in a Globalizing World: Diversity, Interculturality, Hybridity*. Globalization may also be developing in new ways, for instance aided by technological advances such as artificial intelligence. I am now writing an article with one of my master students on robot journalism. In turn, increased globalization and what Professor Guo-ming Chen yesterday referred to as a "global mindset" mean that the relevance and importance of organizations like IAICS and EDIC are increasing. It is therefore a great honor for me to be entrusted by the IAICS Board of Directors with the Presidency of IAICS 2017-19. I would like to take this opportunity to thank especially my predecessor Professor Guo-Ming Chen for his invaluable contribution as President 2015-17, and I look forward to working with all IAICS members and officers, as well as with EDIC.

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The purpose of this special issue of *Intercultural Communication Studies* was as noted to honor Professor St. Clair for his contributions to our organization IAICS and to Communication Studies. He was one of the founding members of IAICS, and also served as Executive Director and Vice President before becoming President in 2013-2015.

The Sage Handbook of Cultural Analysis distinguishes between 4 main traditions of use regarding the term culture: a) the universalist tradition that sees culture as certain standards of human perfection that are universally binding; b) the anthropological tradition in which culture is relative to time and place so that all cultures are equally valuable; c) the structural tradition that sees culture as distinct from other forms of practice such as social, political, economic practices, and then tries to identify the mechanisms that govern relations between these; and finally d) the instrumentalist tradition that sees culture as a resource that can be used to a variety of social, economic and political ends (Bennett & Frow, 2008, pp.3-4).

Small wonder then, that in the English language there have long been several hundred rival definitions of **'**culture' (Burke 1997, p.1). As a minimum, 'culture' (from Latin *cultura*, *cultus,* meaning *cultivation, labor*, *tilling)* can be seen either as a particular form or stage of civilization typifying a certain nation or period, e.g. Chinese culture, or more generally, as the accumulated ways of living that one generation transmits to another, as in the universalist and anthropological traditions mentioned earlier. The challenge in defining 'culture' in precise terms stem in part from the many disciplinary approaches to its study, as many of the lectures and presentations at this conference illustrate.

Further, when cultures meet or intersect, complexities often increase. In our field of intercultural communication studies, various aspects of culture and cultural interaction are scrutinized from a variety of disciplinary perspectives. Yesterday we heard keynote presentations on language by Professor Kecskes on English as a lingua franca (ELF) where he concluded that ELF is not a variety of English but a variable way of using English for communication, a language use mode. He also distinguished between intracultural and intercultural communication. Professor Skehan used the term "metacognition" in discussing planning time and prefabricated language. Professor Cao spoke about news texts as acts of communication and presuppositions as signals of hidden meaning.

Additionally, analysis of cultural encounters, whether these are intracultural or intercultural, will depend on the chosen time perspective and level of analysis. At the individual, family and group level we often find studies of cultural identity and the sense of belonging, or diversity, or verbal and nonverbal interaction, or cultural contexts and the influence of the location or setting, of biculturalism or even multiculturalism and of competency, ethics, ethnocentricity, media influences, etc. Some of these aspects are addressed in a presentation at this conference by two of my students – Margret Stray-Pedersen and Maylin Kristiansen entitled "Intercultural communication in the European Media Cloud Campus Project", which is a media project involving students and teachers from 5 different countries. On higher levels of analysis other issues may arise, as my colleague from the Netherlands, Clyde Moerlie and I discuss in a joint paper entitled "Diversity and the media in the Netherlands and Norway" at this conference (Hofstede, 2016; Hepp, 2015; Durham & Kellner, 2006; Kiesling & Paulston, 2005; Neuliep, 2006).

Turning now to globalization, the media and communication scholar McQuail defined globalization as:

> The overall process whereby the location of production, transmission and reception of media content ceases to be geographically fixed, partly as a result of technology, but also through international media structure and organization. Many cultural consequences are predicted to follow, especially the delocalizing of content and undermining of local cultures. These may be regarded as positive when local cultures are enriched by new impulses and creative hybridization occurs. More often they are viewed as negative because of threats to cultural identity, autonomy and integrity. The new media are widely thought to be accelerating the process of globalization. (McQuail, 2010, p.558).

As we can see from this definition, globalization can be viewed as enriching or as threatening. The term "glocalization" suggests that globalization may strengthen local values, identity and initiative (Hemer & Tufte, 2005). I also think Professors Kecskes, Skehan and Cao yesterday showed us many potentially enriching results of linguistic encounters, for instance neologisms and innovation in syntax and grammar. But in some languages, e.g. French, globalization (mondialisation) is negative and synonymous with Americanization which is seen to threaten French language and culture. In 1947, the Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortiz coined the term 'transculturation', i.e., the merging and converging of cultures (Ortiz, 1947).

In addition to 'globalization', 'glocalization', and 'transculturation' there are many concepts that each suggest what can take place when people from different cultures meet and interact: I have already noted language features such as 'lingua franca', 'metacognition', 'presuppositions of underlying meaning', and let me add for instance socio-political concepts such as 'cosmopolitanism´, 'cross-culturalism', 'inter-culturalism', 'transnationalism', 'hybridity', 'creolization', 'multiculturalism', 'cultural diversity', 'acculturation', 'assimilation', 'culture shock', 'othering', 'Orientalism', 'stereotypes', 'fragmentation of social cohesion', 'Balkanization', 'diaspora'. These are all terms that express what may happen when people of different cultures meet and interact over a period of time. Some of these concepts are used also in contextual models of intracultural and intercultural communication that focus on cultural, micro-cultural, environmental, socio-relational, verbal/non-verbal and perceptual contexts (Neuliep, 2006).

Regarding possible conflictual outcomes when people from different cultures meet, one possibility is the kind of paradigmatic shift that Michel Foucault (1966, 2005) defined as epistemological 'ruptures', or what Edward Said (1978) termed 'Orientalism' and what Samuel Huntington (1996) termed 'clash of civilizations'. From the perspective of post-colonial studies, many have noted the negative impact of Western colonialism, Western stereotypes, 'othering' and Orientalism on the cultures and people of the South, to the extent that the empire is seen to 'write back' (Ashcroft et al, 2002; Zaman et al, 1999). Occasionally, and this has intensified in recent years which we see in the debate on alternative truths of fake news, the media have an apparent agenda and have become driving forces in transcultural conflicts. The so-called cartoon crisis in 2006 is a good example. The Danish newspaper *Jyllands-posten* published irreverent cartoons of the prophet Mohammed, causing an uproar in many Moslem countries.

The consequences are still felt a decade later by many writers and editors living under police protection.

In my field, which is Media and Communication Studies, we take for granted that the media, especially social media from 2000 onwards, have vastly accelerated the pace of globalization and transcultural exchange. In my field culture and cultural exchanges are seen to be increasingly technology-driven and mediated, i.e. conveyed by and through the media, to the extent that some have ventured that "the world is flat" (Friedman, 2008). Theories of the 'agenda setting', 'framing' and 'priming' functions of the media and press demonstrate the impact of mass media on public opinion, on attitudes, opinions and behavior of individuals and groups (Vaagan, 2015; McQuail, 2010). As I argue in a recent textbook, some media scholars believe that while we in the past lived our lives *with* the media, today we seem to live *in and through* the media, at least in those parts of the world where Internet penetration is the highest (Vaagan, 2015:15). For example, Manuel Castells, whose influential trilogy on the network society (Castells, 1996, 1997, 1998) propelled him to world acclaim, in 2009 coined the term "mass self-communication" in recognition of the self-generated global potential reach of social media (Castells 2009).

Today, we see that social media are being used by some politicians and heads of state in unprecedented ways. Professor Keyan Tomaselli in his keynote lecture "Intercultural Communication in 2017. What's going on in the Post-Truth Era?" addressed some of these challenging new developments.

This morning we also heard several speakers giving excellent presentations that engaged the panel and audience. Professor Roland Sussex shared with us thoughts on "The Intercultural Health Care Encounter. Negotiating Roles, Meaning and Information about Pain." Similarly, Professor Guo-ming Chen drew questions and comments with his reflections on "A Yin-Yang Theory of Human Communication." Professor Jane Jackson offered insights on "Interculturality, Diversity and Internationalization: Challenges and Opportunities" which also attracted comments and questions, before Professor Mao Sihui treated us to his engaging analysis of "A Comparative Semiotic study of Two Adaptations of Shakespeare's Hamlet in Chinese Cinema."

The convener of the 2018 IAICS conference, Professor Salma Ghanem, De Paul University, Chicago, finally presented her analysis of "Comparative Persuasive Styles in English and Arabic at the United Nations General Assembly Speeches." In the concluding section, the Organising Committee and its Executive Chairman, Professor Zi-yu Lin, rounded up the conference by thanking everyone for their participation.

In conclusion, I hope that these thoughts on intercultural communication and globalization, have left you with optimism and a strong belief in the importance and relevance of organizations like EDIC and IAICS. We are therefore looking forward to next year's conference at De Paul University in Chicago 5-8 July 2018.

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