COMMUNICATION AS A FORM OF PLURALISM

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Abstract

Our century is already defined as being the era of cultural relations and people acknowledge the importance of knowing the value of the others and in the same time to desiring for their own culture to be known.

Communication skills form the professional capital of a specialist. They are also at the core of social interaction. It's a well-acknowledged fact that man cannot live without communicating. From the very moment we opened eyes for the very first time we "expected" for people around us to provide a proof of existence. Communication affects our general wellbeing due to the fact that the society places great emphasis on the social support and relationships. Communication shows us who we are. And this can only happen by interacting with other people and through this interaction we develop our self-image. By interacting with others we can answer to who we are and how others define us.

Key words: communication, conflict, culture, values, and pluralism

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Communication has an important, well-known and recognized role between people, groups, and cultures. All these would not have been capable to survive unless this consistent binding was present, i.e. communication, which ensures good relations for the horizontal line – between contemporaries – and on the vertical line – between generations.

Our century, even more than the previous ones, is already defined as a century of cultural relations and people feel more acutely the fact that knowing other people's culture is of great importance, and it is combined with the desire to make known individual values. (Boteanu, 2010: 4)

In the 19th century the term "culture" was frequently used as a synonym for western civilization. The British anthropologist Sir Edward B. Taylor has made known the idea that peoples pass through stages of development starting with

wilderness, advancing to *barbarism*, and ending in west with *civilisation.* Such a definition presupposed that those western cultures were considered superior. The eastern cultures, especially China, believed that their very own style of living was superior, which leads us to the conclusion that the problem cannot be placed in terms of superior and inferior cultures, but other reference terms need to be found, such as the relations between major and minor cultures as Romanian philosopher Lucian Blaga suggests.

Most often the culture is seen as a set of principles which the entire activity of a collectivity on all levels take place. In other terms, the culture refers to the transmitted social values, behaviours and symbols that are shared by the members of a social group which they use to interpret and enrich their experience and behaviour. (Dumitru, 1987: 108.)

Culture is a set of values accepted by individuals, groups and societies and its roots are multiple. Our daily display that determines our evolution and decisions are the outcome of many factors such as dynamism and selectivity, behaviours and representatives. As it is closely connected to tradition and the educational milieu, and, most probably connected to options and choices, we thereby draw the conclusion that a most special focus need to be set on transmitting culture in families, schools, mass-medias and role models who might offer a chance to individualise and personalize the nowadays youngsters. An elevated culture, set in an appropriate milieu, would create a climate of study and work that would lead to avoiding and solving conflicts between individuals, groups and it would create tolerant characters.

The term *culture* has many uses and different significances. It is seldom seen that a signified has so many signifiers – in Saussureian language – the terms also applies to agriculture (agricultural culture), human body (physical culture), individual spirit (general culture), an entire society (e.g. the French culture), humanity (classical culture) or biology (microbial culture). (Ferreol,1997: 47) Most likely due to the large area of spreading, culture has become the object of political and scientific debates. In 1952, two American authors, A.L. Kroeber and C. Kluckhohn, were counting 160 definitions given by English anthropologists, sociologists and psychologists of the 17th century.

According to E. Morin, "in social sciences, culture is the least defined term; it comprises the entire human phenomenon to oppose nature, when it defines the place where everything which is not political, economical or religious gather". (Morin, 1989: 677.) The term is benefiting and suffering, in the same time, of the excess of meanings and multiple significances that enriched it throughout history.

Therefore, for a better understanding of the term we need to establish the origin of the term and then debate over the literary and political traditions, as well as the anthropological intercession. "Therefore, we could better focus on the specificity of the sociological approach." (Ferreol,1997: 48)

According to Edward O. Wilson – ethno-sociologist, professor at Harvard University – and Charles J. Lumsden, genes and human culture are strongly connected for thousand of years. They entitle their theory "the genetic culture coevolution". They claim that it is high time to introduce biology and social sciences in a new human Darwinian science… Wilsen and Lumsden published a book that suggests that cultural and genetic evolution have probably became interconnected two million years ago by fuelling each other by the "promethean fire", (Lumsden; Wilson, 1983: 34) that led to brain evolution to attain such a level never attained before by any other organ. They claim that the genetic culture coevolution is the reason that led to nowadays-human brain and its culture. The socio-biology implications over human behaviour are multiple and continue to be largely debated, though unsuccessful in changing the opinion of their adversaries' theory.

The Romanian philosopher Constantin Noica, in full materialist time, had a different point of view: "Human mind cannot not be solidary, in depth, with itself; it was not possible for it to conceive for 2000 years something and suddenly to conceive something else. It is good to remember this in order to keep yourself from ignoring the past, to keep it less glorified sometimes, by bemoaning the present as an aberration. Our culture is a slow and sure meaningful development from the state of pre-Socrates physicists to legit necessity of nowadays science." (Noica, 1969: 6)

As Alfred Smith – emeritus professor at Texas University, anthropologist – specified, culture is a code that we learn and change with others and this type of change requires understanding. For Habermas, understanding takes place when "between the members of the linguistic community an agreement regarding accuracy of relative expression of common normative acknowledged concept is taken". (Habermas, 1983: 201) Communication requires codes and symbols that need to be taught and forwarded to others. Godwin C. Chu noticed that every cultural pattern and every direct deed of social behaviour implies communication. (Godwin, 1977: 45) In order to be understood the two needs to be studied together. Nowadays we take for granted the cultural differences of people from different areas. Each human population requires a unique architecture, tools and art. If sticks, a Schlitz bottle and a gun are shown to your and it would require to

associate them to China, Milwakee and Bornea there would be no problem. Whereas, for Neanderthals there was no cultural diversification, their tools looked just the same wherever those might have been. (Diamond, 2001: 24)

Constantin Noica said that the past with its accumulations of millenniums (Greek culture is itself developed for more than a millennium) offers creations, myths or even rituals, as human experiences that are sedimented and that cannot be found or redone in every single generation. It is said that nowadays a human needs to look after what human is and what it should be, digging down not only to Cicero layer where several Italian humanists are comprised, not even to antique tragic layer but to the original hunger, original fear, the mythical heroes and logic of the beginnings. Is it not that the permanent subconscious explorations that modern man does to himself are revealed by so many techniques from romans to psychoanalysis? Noica states that "regardless of how deep the humanist history and anthropology go, the return to the Greeks remains mandatory – and in this respect, humanism is retrospective – in the manner that man and ages cannot forget about reason." (Noica, 1969: 841)

All cultures started in their own way i.e. *the being*; otherwise they cannot be considered cultures, in the means that they might not arise the happenings to comprising laws or the individual situations to something universal. Though, for all past cultures the being was *travestied* in a mythical, religious and any other way. In the know history, the Greeks alone conceived the being that was not divine, or they are just about the only ones that have the concept of the un-travestied being. In this manner they arose the reason responsibilities and function for them and future generations.

 Studying the elements in a culture, their proved or suggested influence, far from minimalizing the originality or value of an object debated, is actually the proof of creative assimilation power and the capacity to fusion, open and rethink major issues.

Culture is present everywhere and accompanies the society not as a shadow, on the contrary, as its essential fibre. Lucian Blaga stated "The careful and stringent examination of our folk culture brought us to the restorative conclusion regarding the existence of a Romanian stylistic matrix. Its latencies prove us right by stating that we have a high cultural potential. All we know, without the fear to be proven wrong, is the fact that we are the bearers of some rich and exceptional possibilities. All we can believe, without committing an attempt against lucidity, is that we were given the opportunity to enlighten with our flower a corner of soil. All we can hope for, without letting ourselves manoeuvred by illusions, is the

pride of certain spiritual, historical initiatives that, from time to time, to heighten, like a spark, over the heads of other people. The rest is fate." (Blaga, 1969: 258)

The social sciences tried for years to define methods to allow them to get rid of too abstract patterns of interpretation, without being trapped by the easiness of historicism or cultural relativism. The problem of social sciences scientification and its patterns of interpretation might be considered as having a connection to this question related about the other. "The immersion in the world we study condemns us to a practical anthropology in order to retake the Kantian expression, and the question is, as it is connected to ethnology, whether the exterior presupposed by the subject of ethnology is so certain as to allow itself to get rid of such a constrain. " (Augé, 1994: 15)

Historically, the anthropologists focused on other cultures most often miles away from their own. One of the methodological instruments of anthropology as a discipline was the field activity characterised by participative observation: "the researchers are integrated in a society for a longer period of time, they keep reports with whatever occurs over there and try to describe, in familiar terms of their own cultures, 'the social life general traits' that they witnessed. The researchers from the area of ethno-history, i.e. one subdivision of anthropology, use written reports very much." (Geertz, 2000: 58)

A well-known specialist of intercultural communication, Fred J. Jandt, considers that the term "culture" refers to the following:

"1. A community or population sufficiently large enough to be self-sustaining, that is, large enough to produce new generations or members without relying on outside people.

2. The totality of that group's thought, experiences, and patterns of behaviour and its concepts, values, and assumptions about life that guide behaviour and how these evolve with contact to other cultures. Hofstede (1994) classified these elements of culture into four categories: symbols, rituals, values, and heroes. **Symbols** refer to verbal and non-verbal language. **Rituals** are the socially essential collective activities within a culture. **Values** are feelings not open to discussion within a culture about what is good or bad, beautiful or ugly, normal or abnormal, that are present in a majority of the members of a culture or at least in those who occupy pivotal positions. **Heroes** are the real or imaginary people who serve as behaviour models within a culture. A culture's heroes are expressed in the culture's **myths**, which can be the subjects of novels and other forms of literature (Rushing and Frentz, 1978). Janice Hocker Rushing (1983) has argued,

for example, that an enduring myth in the United States culture as seen in films is the rugged individualist cowboy in the American West.

3. A process of social transmission of these thoughts and behaviours learned from birth in the family and schools over the course of generations.

4. Members who consciously identify themselves with that group, described by Collier and Thomas (1988) as **cultural identity**, or the identification with and perceived acceptance into a group that has a shared system of symbols and meaning as norms of conduct." (Jandt, 2004: 7)

Therefore, from the multitude of components that culture is constituted of we cannot take into consideration the language, traditions, and the manner the individual perceives and defines himself. The human species has developed due to its capacity to form social relations that ensures the existence of the individual in different systems, by organising the social labour together, and self assertion by a cohabitation mediated by certain traditions within the communication using the spoken language. In this manner "the interests that lead knowledge to the level of different functions of the ego that adapt to the life conditions from the outside world by using learning techniques." (Habermas, 1983: 135) The forming processes find their place in the complexity of the communication within certain social environments. The social environment is itself the result of social factors. (Anghel, 2009: 15)

We consider that nowadays we can hardly find a domain where people are not involved in intercultural communication.

A Romanian sociologist, Traian Herseni, notices what happens when society is faced to a piece of art. For some that piece of art might mean "art" and for others "religion" (such as the idols and other religious worship objects; for believers they might signify "gods" or "holly objects" with magical powers, and for modern men they might just be "statues" or "decorations"). Herseni also states "some social-humanistic outcome can mean for some "poetry" and for other "magic" (such as incantations) or religion (prayers, hymns, psalms); for some "painting" and for others "icon", therefore a religious object. At the level of literary critics it often happens that for some a book might mean "literature" and for others "wastepaper", and for others "a big book", and for somebody else "an unapproachable book" which is basically inexistent." (Herseni, 1973: 13)

These interpretations do not mean to give out value judgements but to trigger attention towards the fact that impressions, our opinions, attitudes and our value system are the creation of the culture, the informational level, tradition and

mentality developed over ages. Simion Mehedinţi – a Romanian anthropologist – states that all attempts to build ethnography, ethnology, history, and sociology as positive sciences will not be capable to progress in real time unless we agree on the two fundamental aspects of human live: civilisation and culture." (Mehedinţi, 1999: 72)

Also, he considers that from the sociological experience the following conclusion needed to be triggered: as much complex, evolved and civilised a society is the more the physiological aspects are averted in order to make room for the cultural and social cultures. "We might say that in civilised societies sociology eliminates anthropology. From all these we gather that the idea of nation has nothing in common with the idea of race. Who can say – rhetorically asks Rădulescu-Motru – how many races competed to form the Romanian people due to the permanent invasions, immigrations and folk mixture that occurred over our territory in the last millennium?" (Ralea, 1988:204)

Our experience and knowing other cultures is forever limited due to the perceptual prejudice of our own culture. The members inside a group are involved in more open and profound debates and they might feel difficult in developing personal relation with members outside their own groups. Also, certain differences in language code might occur between members of a group. Knowing the language, understanding the codes, general and particular meanings of words facilitates understanding and collaboration.

Conclusions

In our century – dominated by informatics and globalization – communication is essential more than never. In families, groups, organizations, and international meeting no decision can be taken whatsoever unless a good communication between participants is ensured. Communication is the one that offers us the possibility to tell who we are and, in the same time, to find out whom our partners of communication are. By knowing other cultures, other patterns of thinking we succeed to convince ourselves that there are other points of view in rapport to reality. The culture is the one that develops our thinking, facilitates the understanding of unknown situations, and helps the pluralism of opinions and beliefs.

In the same time communication contributes to spreading knowledge from one generation to another and so we know how certain conflicts were solved in the past. Communication is not only a liaison between the members of the same

society but a connection between generations, different cultures, beliefs and different mentalities.

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