

Intercultural
Communicative
Competence
in English Language
Teaching in Polish
State Colleges

Intercultural Communicative Competence in English Language Teaching in Polish State Colleges

By

Piotr Romanowski

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Peer-reviewed by Dr. Neva Cebren, University of Primorska, Slovenia.

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To Sylwia, Zuzia and Julka
without whose company most intercultural encounters
would not have been the same.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Tables and Figures	ix
Foreword	x
Introduction	1
Chapter One.....	6
Culture and Communication in the Light of Intercultural Studies	
1.1 Intercultural studies – their history and basic assumptions	
1.2 The concept of culture as used in intercultural studies	
1.3 The impact of culture on the process of intercultural communication	
1.4 Diverse cultural patterns	
Chapter Two	35
Language and Intercultural Communication	
2.1 Language as a basic means of interpersonal communication	
2.2 Models of communication and their components – a review	
2.3 The role of English in modern-day communication	
2.4 Intercultural aspects of English as the lingua franca in the 21 st Century	
Chapter Three	48
From Linguistic Competence to Intercultural Communicative Competence	
3.1 Types of competence – their definitions and value for the communication process	
3.2 From linguistic competence to sociolinguistic communicative competence	
3.3 Communicative competence as a forerunner of intercultural communicative competence	
3.4 Intercultural communicative competence and its components	
3.5 Intercultural sensitivity as an essential dimension of intercultural communicative competence	
3.6 Developing essential skills and knowledge for intercultural communicative competence	

Chapter Four.....	75
Intercultural Approach in Language Education	
4.1 On the way to intercultural learning	
4.2 Ethnographic approach	
4.3 Experiential learning	
4.4 Comparative approach	
4.5 Intercultural communicative competence in the classroom – challenges, opportunities and difficulties	
Chapter Five.....	96
Techniques for Developing Intercultural Communicative Competence	
5.1 Simulation games and their methodological value	
5.2 Case studies	
5.3 Critical incidents	
5.4 Role plays	
5.5 Culture assimilators	
Chapter Six.....	116
Investigating the Intercultural Communicative Competence of Polish Students of English	
6.1 The course in intercultural communication and its description	
6.2 The main objectives and assumptions of the study	
6.3 Research methodology in intercultural communication	
6.4 Research design	
6.5 Research context and its target group	
Chapter Seven.....	138
Findings of the Investigation	
7.1 Research analysis and results	
7.2 The culture-specific profile of students of English at Polish colleges	
7.3 The course in intercultural communication and its evaluation by the students	
Conclusion.....	173
Bibliography.....	178

LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

- Table 1. Differences between small and large power distance societies
- Table 2. Ten differences between weak and strong uncertainty avoidance societies
- Table 3. Ten differences between collectivist and individualist societies
- Table 4. Ten differences between feminine and masculine societies
- Table 5. An overview of two different time concepts and their resultant behaviour
- Table 6. Research sample
- Table 7. Positive attitudes towards intercultural differences (before the course in intercultural communication)
- Table 8. Negative attitudes towards intercultural differences (before the course in intercultural communication)
- Table 9. Positive attitudes towards intercultural differences (after the course in intercultural communication)
- Table 10. Negative attitudes towards intercultural differences (after the course in intercultural communication)
- Table 11. The varying values of students' positive attitudes towards intercultural differences
- Table 12. The varying values of students' negative attitudes towards intercultural differences
- Figure 1. Poland and the research areas
- Figure 2. The increased values of students' positive attitudes towards intercultural differences
- Figure 3. The decreased values of students' negative attitudes towards intercultural differences
- Figure 4. Box-and-whisker plot of mean values of positive attitudes
- Figure 5. Box-and-whisker plot of mean values of negative attitudes
- Figure 6. Distribution of mean values before the course – positive attitudes
- Figure 7. Distribution of mean values after the course – positive attitudes
- Figure 8. Distribution of mean values before the course – negative attitudes
- Figure 9. Distribution of mean values after the course – negative attitudes
- Figure 10. The calculation of the statistics for hypothesis 1
- Figure 11. The calculation of the statistics for hypothesis 2

FOREWORD

It is a demanding time to be a language educator. After a hard week in class, today's trainee or novice language instructor might be forgiven for looking back with some nostalgia to an easier epoch when the agenda, it seems, was easier: all you needed to do was to design curricula, courses and tasks so that the students might accomplish a series of well-defined and relatively simple learning outcomes, such as mastering the second conditional, or apologizing politely. That era has passed, and the hard-pressed instructor now faces a much more complex challenge: to devise language curricula, courses and classes that shape learners into interculturally competent beings. An interculturally competent being is someone who possesses much more than evolving knowledge about the vocabulary and grammar of the target language, together with the skills and subskills that are required to communicate in it accurately and fluently. An interculturally competent being possesses the linguistic knowledge, emotional resources and ethical qualities necessary to mediate otherness, cope with strangeness and make wise judgements in unpredictable situations. Developing intercultural communicative competence, or ICC, is, as they now say, a big ask.

To rise to this challenge, the 21st century teacher needs to draw upon more than a deep knowledge of linguistic and pedagogical theory and practice, fundamentally important though these domains remain. To these domains, however, must be added understanding of critical and cultural theory, applied philosophy, models of intercultural communication, descriptive techniques drawn from anthropological fieldwork, and interpretive skills drawn from semiotics and discourse analysis. The teacher needs also to think about how to distil the insights from these diverse domains and transform them into classroom activities that will promote certain types of knowledge, certain types of attitude and a set of skills that far exceed reading, writing, speaking and listening.

The trainee or novice ELT teacher who is bewildered or daunted by the challenges of teaching intercultural communicative competence will benefit greatly from reading Piotr Romanowski's account of designing and assessing courses in ICC for Polish State Colleges. This is far from a narrow study: Romanowski clearly establishes key points of reference for the reader, reviewing the basic concepts of culture that inform widely used

models of ICC, and showing how ICC is related to – but not identical to – intercultural communication. The reader will also be able to relate the teaching of ICC to familiar issues, such as the debates around the rise of English as a lingua franca, and to familiar practices, such as the design of language learning tasks. One of the many attractions of Romanowski's volume is that the comprehensive and rich theoretical framework leads naturally into a detailed description of classroom activities.

One of the keenest challenges facing ELT teachers who advocate and adopt intercultural language education is to do with how the knowledge, attitudes and skills associated with ICC might be assessed. The final chapters of Romanowski's volume address this issue more explicitly than many fellow ICC practitioners. He claims that intercultural sensitivity is not only a necessary prerequisite for ICC but also that it can be measured empirically, and that its development can be monitored and treated as an index of developing ICC. Romanowski offers a case study that demonstrates how the delivery of ICC courses in a number of culturally diverse Polish State Colleges raised aspects of students' intercultural sensitivity. The case study offers readers a detailed mode of assessment that could usefully be replicated and tested across a broader range of educational contexts.

This volume, then, despite the specificity implied in its sub-title, should appeal to trainee, novice and even many experienced language teachers who are looking for a general introduction to intercultural language teaching, and who might be interested in adapting a clearly explained case study of its application in a particular educational domain. And the hard-pressed language instructor described at the beginning of this foreword can take comfort in the fact that, thanks to Piotr Romanowski and his fellow educators, the 21st century classroom might be a lot more demanding than it used to be – but, for both teachers and learners, it is also infinitely more interesting and rewarding.

John Corbett
University of Macau
November 2016

INTRODUCTION

Intercultural communicative competence encompasses knowledge, skills and attitudes at the interface between several cultural areas including the students' own values and worldviews and those of a target language country. Consequently, the development of intercultural communicative competence is seen as a process that involves the students' experiences from their own cultural backgrounds allowing them, at the same time, to reflect on their individual cultural assumptions as an integral part of further development of their skills and knowledge of the world. Intercultural communicative competence is inseparable from language teaching, but linguists and methodologists started to consider it as a major facet of language instruction only recently. Nowadays, the stress is put on those foreign language teaching methods which enable learners to become successful communicators. Hence, they are expected not only to exchange information, for which they need to master a linguistic code, but also to maintain proper relationships with their interlocutors. The task reveals great cultural richness and complexity due to the multiplicity and abundance of cultural identities of the speakers. We may thus posit that an experience of otherness is a natural component of communication in a foreign language. Its sources are twofold: firstly, learners experience strangeness of their interlocutors and secondly, their contact with unfamiliar others challenges their own understanding of reality and often makes them discover a stranger in themselves.

Although several models of intercultural communicative competence with its respective components have already been created – Milton J. Bennett (1986), Colleen Kelley and Judith Meyers (1999), Guo-Ming Chen and William J. Starosta (2000), Wolfgang Fritz and Antje Moellenberg (2002) and Michael F. Tucker (2004) – its mastering is still a challenge for language teachers and learners alike. The difficulty is twofold, because, as already mentioned, on the one hand learners are to possess the language and, on the other, they have to be able to use it in various cultural contexts, in which they interact. The challenge is particularly strongly felt in the countries where the experience of intercultural communication is fairly new. Consequently, a burning matter is to investigate the role of extra-linguistic, mainly culture-specific factors, in the process. Special attention should be paid to the role – either of a

facilitator or a barrier – of the learners' mother culture. Its positive or negative function as underlying determinants of the learners' knowledge, skills and attitudes, depends on the degree of similarity between the cultures involved in communication. The closer the relationship between the learners' mother culture and the target culture of the speech community whose language they want to study, the less painful and the more successful the foreign language teaching/learning process.

Guo-Ming Chen and William J. Starosta (2000), Wolfgang Fritz and Antje Moellenberg (2002) and Michael F. Tucker (2004) all identified intercultural communicative sensitivity as a component of intercultural communicative competence. However, considering its influence on all the other components, as well as on the final success of mastering intercultural communicative competence, the author posits that it can be assigned the status of its major determinant. Its development depends on the learners' experience of another culture, which they can get either by means of either a formal exposure to it during language courses when it is taught together with a foreign language, or by means of intercultural communication courses which have been specifically designed for this purpose. It should also be mentioned that non-institutionalized means of developing it are possible in the course of informal interpersonal contacts with foreigners on various types of occasions.

The present research is to examine the correlation between intercultural communicative sensitivity of Polish learners of English and the experience of cultural pluralism created by their participation in, first of all, the course in intercultural communication included in the syllabus of their studies and, secondly, in their personal and informal relations with foreigners in Poland and abroad. It thus aims at investigating the relationship between the students' experience and knowledge of multiculturalism and their intercultural communicative competence.

The study was conducted in four similar educational institutions in Poland: Legnica State College, Elbląg State College, Łomża State College, and Krosno State College, among the students of English Language Studies whose command of the language was fairly good, so that this did not significantly account for any communication failure. Additionally, some of the students had already been exposed to some cultural diversity of two different types. The first one was obvious to them and it was constituted by their direct contacts with foreigners in Poland as well as during their trips abroad, e.g. as Erasmus exchange students or as holidaymakers – though only a very small number of our respondents had had an international experience prior to their participation in the present study. The second type was less consciously experienced as it was related

to the phenomenon of Polish intraculturalism. Historically speaking, the regions where most of the students reside have always been part of a Polish melting pot marked with religious, linguistic and ethnic diversity and manifested as a variety of languages (mainly used at home with family members), customs and traditions, holidays, architecture, cuisine, etc. Thus, the author also claims that while investigating the level of intercultural communicative competence of his respondents, attention should be focused on the impact of the intraculturalism of Lower Silesia, Pomerania, Podlasie and Subcarpathian Regions on it.

The decision to investigate intercultural communication competence of the students of the State Colleges stems from two reasons. Firstly, most of the students will work as teachers in local schools or kindergartens and become models for their learners whose ability to communicate with strangers will determine their educational, professional and also personal success. However, most probably their students will use predominantly English in communicating with other foreigners due to the fact that English has the status of a modern *lingua franca*, an international means of communication, which has become de-nationalized as each speaker uses it filtered through his/her own cultural experience. In effect, apart from rare instances when it is spoken by its native speakers, we cannot attach any particular culture to English anymore. It becomes an additional challenge to both teachers and learners which culture to choose while teaching/learning English to be effective intercultural communicators. Thus, the ultimate goal in the process of foreign-language learning should be to become an intercultural mediator, a person who has mastered both linguistic competence and intercultural communicative competence and is able to transcend boundaries thanks to the ability to recognize, negotiate and transfer cultural property and symbolic value.

Secondly, most State Colleges are located in smaller cities, usually in economically disadvantaged area; and this is directly related to the students' opportunities for travelling and developing the skills of intercultural communicators on their own. In their case the role of the school in developing their ability to act as intercultural communicators as well as its responsibility for it is much bigger than in important universities and academic centres.

The role of the cultural component in developing intercultural communicative competence is unquestionable. It is not without a reason to claim that the extra-linguistic dimensions of intercultural communication encouraged the research in the field and inspired the study of the non-linguistic skills that it is necessary for a competent intercultural communicator to develop (Kramsch, 1998; Byram *et al.*, 2001). In Poland,

there has been observed a growing number of studies in the field of intercultural pragmalinguistics lately, but contrary to what could be expected, the number of Polish researchers engaged in a systematic investigation of the non-linguistic determinants of intercultural communicative competence is rather small (Mackiewicz, 2005). Hence the decision to fill up the gap by investigating the extra-linguistic determinants of intercultural communicative competence of Polish learners. As far as the author knows, the present research is the first attempt to do it in a systematic way.

In order to accomplish the goal, a questionnaire was especially constructed as a research tool. It was inspired by the questionnaires originally used by Guo-Ming Chen and William J. Starosta in 2000 and Wolfgang Fritz and Antje Moellenberg in 2002. Both instruments were intended to assess intercultural sensitivity of American and German students respectively, and they did the job satisfactorily. To apply the instrument in another cultural setting, namely Poland, all that it was necessary to do was to adjust the questions in the administered survey to the Polish realities. The questionnaire was completed with guided interviews conducted with the students to clarify or deepen some of the answers they provided. The second aim of these interviews was to find out about their personal knowledge and experience of multiculturalism, which they gained in informal learning situations outside the school.

A thorough analysis of the empirical material from the questionnaire as well as the interviews made it possible to identify the most common values and attitudes held as components of intercultural sensitivity of the Polish students of English. Then, the dimensions of cultural diversity according to Geert Hofstede's model of culture together with their underlying values were used to classify them in order to predict the potential areas of communication misunderstandings between the Polish learners of English and representatives of other cultures.

The research consisted of two parts: the first was carried out before the students started the course in intercultural communication; the second followed its completion, which allowed an assessment of the value of the course for developing the intercultural sensitivity of the students.

The present volume is composed of six chapters. Its first five chapters serve as theoretical frames for further development of the empirical part. Chapter One entitled *Culture and Communication in the Light of Intercultural Studies* sets the scene by discussing the history and basic assumptions of intercultural communication studies. It also stresses the role of culture in intercultural communication. Chapter Two with the title *Language and Intercultural Communication* aims at providing an overview of basic communication models. It looks closer at English – the

present-day *lingua franca*. Chapter Three *From Linguistic Competence to Intercultural Communicative Competence* presents the historical perspective of the development of the notion of ‘competence’. It focuses on intercultural communicative competence and its components. Chapter Four entitled *Intercultural Approach in Language Education* takes the discussion closer to the practical application of intercultural training in language teaching. It discusses various approaches proposed for the development of intercultural communicative competence in foreign-language teaching. Chapter Five *Techniques for Developing Intercultural Communicative Competence in the Classroom* debates on the practicability of simulation games, case studies, critical incidents, role plays, and culture assimilators as the most common types of activities meant for the enhancement of intercultural training. Chapter Six *Investigating Intercultural Communicative Competence of Polish Students of English* is devoted to the discussion of the methodology used. It concentrates on the research design and delineates the context for the study and the target group. The empirical material collected from questionnaires, participant observation and interviews is presented in Chapter Seven *Findings of the Investigation*. It examines intercultural sensitivity as the main determinant of intercultural communicative competence developed among the students of English at four Polish colleges in Legnica, Elbląg, Łomża and Krosno before the commencement of the course in intercultural communication and after its successful completion. As follows from the investigation of the empirical data the students have improved their intercultural skills and changed their attitudes, which helped them comprehend cultural differences much better and accommodate to them.

Although the research has been carried out among the students of English, which nowadays has become the common language of communication, its findings as well as general conclusions may be applied to other languages. Hence, it is the author’s intention to share them with my colleagues in Poland and abroad hoping for their usefulness and applicability in developing the intercultural communicative competence of their own learners.

CHAPTER ONE

CULTURE AND COMMUNICATION IN THE LIGHT OF INTERCULTURAL STUDIES

Introduction

In this chapter the beginnings of intercultural communication studies dating back to ancient times as well as their evolution will be discussed. It was in the USA that the first systematic research into intercultural training was initiated after World War II. The Author will also focus on similar developments in Europe, and in Poland – his country of origin. The concept of culture, affecting the success of communication in intercultural encounters, will be subjected to thorough analysis. Last but not least, following the models of culture proposed by Geert Hofstede and Edward T. Hall, a presentation of various cultural patterns will be considered.

1.1 Intercultural studies – their history and basic assumptions

In global and inter-reliant contacts intercultural communication is a 'must'. It develops dynamically due to more and more frequent and intense relationships among international, multiethnic and plurilingual scholars, students, customers and travellers, to name only a few categories. The statement that it is paramount in a world full of differences has become a basic truth today.

One of the reasons why an average person has become an intercultural communicator who experiences cultural differences on a daily basis is because the proximity is greater between cultures. Globalization is the main factor accounting for the change as the nations whose languages, cultures and worldviews have differed significantly make contact now and become mutually dependent. They tend to co-operate with each other and act as partners in various fields although geographically speaking some of them might remain hundreds of miles away from one another. Due to political and socio-economic changes more people can cross the borders of

their own countries and become global students, nomads, tourists, employees, etc. However, contrary to what one might think, the facility with which they can act as global citizens, does not facilitate to the same extent their interpersonal relations. Participants in intercultural encounters are challenged by multiplied opportunities for cultural misunderstanding. The way they manage to overcome them is tightly linked with their success or failure in the process of communication. Thus, today more than ever before the biggest difficulty consists in the manner in which they deal with the culture-specific differences they face.

The above sentence is supported by an experience of many interlocutors who are fluent in a given foreign language, most often English, and thus do not lack linguistic skills, but who still fail to achieve their communication goals. Let me stress one crucial fact again that in the post-modern reality marked with cultural diversity most communication failures result from a low level of intercultural communicative competence or even a lack of it. Linguistic competence is no longer a sufficient prerequisite of a communication success because communication has to be understood as more than a mere exchange of information and sending of messages. As posited by Paul Watzlawick, Janet Beavin and Don Jackson (1968) it consists of two mutually complementary levels – a factual one which is an exchange of information and an interpersonal one which serves to create relationships between speakers. In both cases culture-specific differences play an important role. In the first case, communication success is dependent upon the receiver's understanding of the speaker's message in another cultural context which, in turn, accounts for its interpretation and a final assigning of meaning to it during the decoding phase. In the second case, it entails culture-specific expectations about the type of interpersonal relations proper to a given communication act.

Considering the above remarks, intercultural communication is basically understood as an exchange of information between speakers with different cultural identities when "a message producer is a member of one culture and a message receiver is a member of another" (Porter and Samovar, 1982: 27). Their different cultural backgrounds result in their incongruent experience of communication practices, leading to potential difficulties in understanding each other. More or less serious misunderstandings inherent in communication which apply to both factual and interpersonal levels encourage Jerzy Mikułowski-Pomorski (2003, 2006) to posit that the main aim of intercultural communicators is to understand others and to be understood by them despite culture-specific differences present in their encounters. Thus, as Michael Byram (1997: 3-4) claims, successful intercultural communication cannot be judged solely in terms of the

efficiency of information exchange but also in terms of the effectiveness of establishing and maintaining interpersonal relationships. Other definitions (cf. Kim, 1991: 259; Brislin and Yoshida, 1994) which have proliferated since the official recognition of intercultural communication as an academic field evolve around the aforementioned definition provided by Jerzy Mikołowski-Pomorski.

Although an academic and systematic approach to intercultural communication by ethnographers, anthropologists, communication studies researchers and linguists is only sixty years old, some less well-defined and haphazard interest in it started long before Jesus Christ (cf. Mikołowski-Pomorski, 2003: 21). Historically speaking, intercultural communication dates back to the 5th century BC when Herodotus (489-425 BC), a Greek from Asia, who is said to be the first author dealing with it, travelled to Persia, Egypt and Italy in order to gather information about various cultures and their inhabitants. He described the societies he had visited in such a way as to show their moral superiority over other ethnic tribes. The ethnocentric attitude of Herodotus was considered to be one of the earliest examples of discrimination, also investigated by Publius Cornelius Tacitus (55-120 BC) – the author of the well-known treaty *Germania*.

The Crusades in the Middle Ages (11th-13th centuries), originally designed to conquer Jerusalem and now seen as the final acts in the Great Schism between the Eastern Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church, were also prolific in intercultural communication encounters (cf. the input of crusaders). The Age of Discovery from the early the 15th century and continuing into the 17th century, during which European ships travelled around the world in search of new trading routes and commercial goods such as gold, silver and spices, led to numerous contacts between Europeans and peoples of previously unknown lands. As a matter of fact, the great wave of expeditions enabled navigators to travel to virtually any destination in order to conquer and colonize the territories and those who inhabited them. Both the Crusades and the discoveries of new lands had a far-reaching political, economic, and social impact, which is still to be observed in many spheres of life in contemporary times.

Further intensive works on the comparison of cultures were continued in the era of the Enlightenment. In that period so-called *eurocentrism* originated, initiating the importance of intellectual advancement and providing the background for the idea of the development of nations. European societies were viewed as better-developed and further advanced due to the progress of their civilization than other non-European cultures

regardless of their past achievements and true contribution to the world heritage.

Although intercultural communication has its origins in ancient times, it definitely produced its own methods, techniques, tools and procedures of investigation only as late as in the 20th century. It was after the end of World War II, which changed the world order by introducing a new political geography, when the need to communicate successfully in a multicultural reality was especially strongly felt. The USA became then an unquestionable winner and the main architect of the new after-war and post-colonial reality. Considering the new world situation as well as American multiculturalism, it was in the USA where the new academic discipline of intercultural communication was born as an essential factor determining global peace and co-operation between nations. The US ethnographers and anthropologists joined by linguists engaged in a systematic investigation of cultures of, first of all, new American business partners from Mexico and Japan as well as slowly decolonized South America and Asia. An academic inquiry was undertaken to confirm the validity of more impressionistic observations mainly by business people. Its aim was also to create and refine the theoretical basis of research in the field. Namely, anthropologists sought to describe behaviours envisaged by cultural patterns and themes. At the same time, linguists started studying exotic and uncommon languages, which provided them with a larger perspective on how to understand various tongues and modes of communication. Furthermore their findings had an impact on the field of second language learning and acquisition. Their work evidenced a strong relationship between culture and language. In the 1950s such an approach was new and challenging. It was also the time when many aid programmes came into existence aimed at teaching or improving interpersonal skills of people who were to communicate across cultures. Also, various teaching techniques were devised, refined and employed because, as already mentioned, the process of intercultural communication consists in not only sending messages, but first of all, in acting as cultural mediators. It means that to be a successful communicator, the speaker has to step out of their own world views and use empathy as an emotional and cognitive filter in the communication process.

Hence workshops and lectures started to be offered to various professional groups. The first training sessions were of short duration and mostly confined to the processing of information regarding the culture of the target group. The information was very practical and detailed. Tied together, it was used to publish the first programme manuals, which appeared in 1970 in the USA – as David Hoopes (1975: 11) notes.

The second incentive for the development of intercultural communication studies was the work of Peace Corps volunteers against culturally unfamiliar contexts in Africa and Asia. The organization was established in the USA to help people in economically disadvantaged regions or in the areas marked by wars, armed conflicts or ethnic cleansing. Its volunteers often failed while working in the regions and it was culture or rather the complete lack of its understanding which hindered their efforts. Thus they have become an immediate target group for intercultural training programmes as well as their direct beneficiaries enabled quickly to check the value of their intercultural skills in practice.

The third factor advocating the development of intercultural communication studies was the demand from international students who in most cases selected American and British universities to study at. Again, many of them came from former colonies where a proper system of education did not yet exist and where upbringing was in a totally different cultural tradition when compared with the western world. Their cultural background explains why although they spoke English, they were still faced with many difficulties and cultural puzzles. The same applied to their American professors, counsellors, and administration staff as well as new friends and landlords because although America had always been a multicultural country, the ability to communicate with cultural strangers was not satisfactorily mastered by an average American citizen. Thus courses in intercultural communication became a survival kit for both American and foreign students. In fact they were offered on all American campuses, most often as pre-course training.

The Civil Rights Movement was the fourth factor which sensitized average Americans to the value of multiculturalism and to the necessity of mastering the skills of an intercultural communicator. The movement came to prominence in the early 1960s making the understanding and management of ethnic differences one of the major socio-political issues to solve (cf. Hoopes, 1975).

There existed two main sets of factors directing the focus on cultural variability with a delay in Eastern and Central Europe. The first refers to the political system of communism, whose ideology did not recognize cultural diversity as a social asset and a source of symbolic capital of a particular country. Consequently, especially in the 1950s and 1960s, during the era of Stalinism, the armament race and the policy of the Cold War, ethnic, religious and cultural diversity was promoted only if it fitted ideological principles. Moreover, at that time neither economic partnership nor informal relations between the two parts of Europe separated by the Berlin Wall was promoted, which resulted in mutual estrangement,

stereotypical knowledge of each other, fear and hostility. The second group relied on the contacts between scientific and academic centres in the west and in Eastern Europe, which were however too poor to allow for a significant exchange of thoughts, ideas and people. Consequently, as intercultural co-operation was rudimentary, intercultural communication studies could not successfully develop, either.

As mentioned earlier, the first efforts to understand culturally different communication processes fostered development of academic interest in the field in the USA. The book often regarded as a start into a systematic study of culture in relation to interpersonal communication was written by Ruth Benedict in 1947. Its title is *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* and it was to help Americans to communicate with the Japanese war prisoners. Hence the book is seen an attempt to understand the Japanese society through a study of its culture. The biggest contribution of Ruth Benedict consists in finding consistent patterns of culture-specific values typical of the Japanese culture. Scholars tried to analyze them in terms of everyday behaviours of the Japanese to better understand them. Her second contribution to the field of cultural studies consisted in promoting cultural relativism as the only just and academic approach to examine cultures. Ruth Benedict also believed that each culture has its own moral imperatives that can be both understood and evaluated only if one studies culture as a whole from the perspective of its native users.

However important the aforementioned efforts were, it must be acknowledged that the emergence of the academic discipline of intercultural communication started with the publication of Edward T. Hall's *The Silent Language* in 1959. The value and contribution of the book was enormous as it provided the first comprehensive analysis of the interdependence between culture and communication.

Considering the scope as well as the variety of issues involved in intercultural communication, it must be stated that from the very beginning it was an interdisciplinary field which borrowed many of its fundamental concepts from its sister fields of study such as: anthropology, ethnography, sociology, psychology, communication and linguistics. The most promising contributions into the area were made, among others, by Ruth Benedict (1934), Weston La Barre (1954), Geoffrey Gorer (1955), Margaret Mead (1964) whose work focused on cultural patterns, as well as by Milton J. Bennett (1979), Florian Coulmas (1981), Stella Ting-Toomey (1988), Shoshana Blum-Kulka with her associates (1989), Anna Wierzbicka (1991), William B. Gudykunst and Young Y. Kim (1992). Most of them were not trained linguists, which resulted in fairly late contrastive examinations of the impact of culture on the use of particular

languages in chosen speech acts, e.g. an examination of speech acts from an intercultural perspective. Their research helped create an awareness of the complex relationships of culture and communication, language and culture, language and thought, and the second-language learning/teaching. A deeper understanding of the basic conceptual framework of culture applied to communication processes, shed a new light on old queries referring to familiar issues and thus, enriching the field of intercultural communication immeasurably (Damen, 1987: 25).

Roughly speaking, intercultural studies refer to the role of the cultural component in communication processes which determines both verbal and non-verbal communication behaviours. The proponents (Clifton, 1968; Keesing, 1974; Nostrand, 1978) of the thesis posit that there are no communication studies without the study of culture. It was the beginning of a new approach to communication issues which got its legitimization in the today legendary statement of Edward T. Hall that *communication is culture and culture is communication* (1959: 97). Although in the form Hall assigned to it the statement was controversial, its weaker version where culture is treated merely as a central differentiating variable in the process of communication has been widely accepted and constitutes a fundamental principle of intercultural communication studies.

Intercultural communication studies are deeply indebted mainly to sociolinguistics and anthropology. Dell Hymes (1962), John Gumperz (1964), Basil Bernstein (1966), Ervin Goffman (1971, 1976) to name only a few from a long list of researchers who were great contributors to the discipline: they were interested in investigating extra-linguistic factors which determined a different use of language in definite communication situations. Thus, their focus on socio-cultural facets and parameters refined the approach to communication and drew attention to the value of other than linguistic factors for its successful development.

Dell Hymes, who is the founding father of the ethnography of communication stressed the need to investigate interactions among members of various cultures. The ethnography of speech is a method of discourse analysis in linguistics, which draws on the anthropological field of ethnography. According to Dell Hymes' theory speakers must be able to discern which communication acts and/or codes are important to a given group of speakers, what types of meanings they apply to different communication events, and how they learn the codes which provide an insight into particular communities. The communicative value of the insight consists in its ability to enhance communication with group members, to make sense of group members' decisions, and to distinguish groups from each another. Dell Hymes' investigation aimed at proving that

cultures communicate in different ways and all forms of communication require a shared code, which should be known by interlocutors. Therefore, the cultural dimension of the following aspects: the code, the channel, the setting, the message form, the topic, and then event created by transmission of the message need to be taken into consideration (cf. Hymes, 1962: 312).

An attempt to explain the existing differences in communication patterns by examining their social dimensions was made by a sociologist, John Gumperz (1964). His approach known as Interactional Sociolinguistics allowed him to analyze variations in discourse within a particular speech community by studying how they affected the unfolding of meaning in interaction. He wanted to find out how they correlate with the social order of the speech and culture community and more exactly how the order of situations and the culture of the speaker affect the way in which conversational inferences are made. These, in turn, allow for a final interpretation of verbal or non-verbal signals known as contextualization cues.

The impact of culture on communication was also evidenced by the research of Basil Bernstein (1966: 433) who saw culture as the central value which accounts for collective interests, identities, expectations and identifications of members in a given community. Hence his distinction between restricted and elaborated codes which reflect the socio-cultural make-up of their users. The value of culture for interpersonal communication was directly claimed by Larry Samovar *et al.* (1981: 18) according to whom proper communication research cannot be conducted without the study of culture. He justified his approach explaining that communication always occurs against a rich socio-cultural background, which means that understanding communication equals understanding its background.

An interest in intercultural communication was also fostered by Geoffrey Leech (1983) whose main academic interest was pragmatics, the study of language in use. He researched the ability of natural language speakers to communicate more than just what is explicitly stated in their utterances by means of linguistic forms of expression. Pragmatics studies the socio-cultural forces in play for a given utterance including power, gender, race, identity, etc. For example, code switching resulting from socio-cultural variables directly relates to pragmatics, since it affects a shift in the pragmatic force of an utterance. Thus pragmatics helps those researching the field of intercultural issues to relate elements of language to broader socio-cultural phenomena.

At the very beginning of intercultural communication studies, the main interest was to know and understand the target culture undermining at the

same time the role of the speaker's mother culture and his/her cultural self-cognition in the process. The gap was substantially filled up in the 1990s when Fons Trompenaars and Charles Hampden-Turner (1993: 175) postulated that in order to reduce the possibility of a communication failure, not to mention of a culture shock, in intercultural contacts, the interactors' knowledge of their own culture is as important as the knowledge of the host-country culture. Geert Hofstede (1986: 58) also argues the necessity to focus on the values of national cultures to understand how intercultural communication works. The model of culture with five dimensions of cultural diversity proposed by him was to provide a frame of reference for a more systematic and comprehensive approach to the understanding of the concept.

Institutionalization of intercultural communication started in the 1960s when the first courses entered American universities and other academic institutions. An overwhelming number of studies in the field resulted in a series of lectures and workshops initiated by the University of Pittsburg. Later, the need to establish an organization serving as a forum for intercultural educators and supervising their research, teaching and training activities was met in 1975 when the Society International for Education, Training and Research (SIETAR) was founded in Washington D.C. Today its branches exist in many countries, e.g. SIETAR Japan, SIETAR Germany, SIETAR France and since 2009 SIETAR Poland. The Global Awareness Society International (GASI), with its headquarters at Bloomsburg University in Pennsylvania, is another example of an institution investigating global issues including communication and education.

At this point it is also worth mentioning that there exist several publishing houses specializing in intercultural communication studies and disciplines related to it. Among them, Intercultural Press from Boston in the USA celebrating more than 25 years on the market, is one of the best known institutions worldwide. In its catalogue professionals, business people, travellers and scholars researching the meaning and diversity of culture will find books, and a wide variety of training materials designed for those who interact with people from other cultures. Another international independent publishing house is Multilingual Matters from Clevedon in the UK, with long lists of books in the areas of intercultural communication, second/foreign language learning, sociolinguistics, translation, and interpreting, to name only a few. They also publish peer-reviewed academic journals including the results of scientific research regarding the disciplines mentioned above.

In Poland, intercultural studies were first undertaken by the Department of Sociology at the University of Warsaw. Its pioneering *Komunikacja międzykulturowa: zbliżenia i impresje* (Kapciak, Korporowicz and Tyszko (eds.), 1995) and *Komunikacja międzykulturowa: zderzenia i spotkania* (Kapciak, Korporowicz and Tyszko (eds.), 1996), offered scholars and readers a synthesis of intercultural communication issues investigated by foreign sociologists, intercultural communication trainers, linguists and psychologists. Examples of public institutions which took steps towards discussing the importance of intercultural studies in the contemporary world are many but the most widely recognized seem to be the International Centre of Culture, the Centre of Jewish Culture and the “Villa Decius” Foundation in Cracow, the Institute of Culture in Warsaw, the Foundation “Pogranicze” (‘Borderlands’) in Sejny.

A very interesting view on culture-oriented language studies was demonstrated in the research project, “Polish national culture, trends of development and perception”, co-ordinated by Jerzy Bartmiński of the Institute of Slavic Studies at the Polish Academy of Sciences, who at the beginning of the 1990s looked into the relationship between language and culture viewed in terms of anthropological linguistics and ethnolinguistics. Among the conclusions resulting from his research findings, he stated that language is the central component of culture, its tool and its symbolic code and determinant. Its function is twofold because, on the one hand it reflects the existing cultural values and, on the other hand, it creates new dimensions of the world for its users. The project is regarded to be of vital importance for Polish language and culture studies because by creating new research methods, tools and terminology, ethnolinguistics has acquired a new status in Poland.

The Institute of Applied Linguistics, within the Faculty of Modern Languages of Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań has proved to be a very important centre on the Polish map of intercultural studies. It changed its scope of research in 1991, when it added intercultural communication to its academic research agenda. It provides courses of intercultural communication alongside comparative linguistics, cultural studies, information technology and foreign-language teaching methodology.

In Cracow, an institution whose *raison d’être* are various aspects of intercultural communication is the UNESCO Chair for Translation Studies and Intercultural Communication which was founded in July 2002, by virtue of the agreement between the Jagiellonian University in Cracow and UNESCO. It is one of over 500 units in the network covering many countries worldwide. In 2006 The UNESCO Chair for Translation Studies and Intercultural Communication obtained the status of an academic and

teaching institution operating within the Jagiellonian University in Cracow. It pursues its aims through an integrated research and teaching programme on the local, national and international scale through an integration and development of the existing curricula for the training of translators and interpreters in the full range of translation types addressing the needs of Poland's new political, economic and cultural situation after its accession to the European Union.

A growing role of universities in fostering the knowledge of intercultural communication and its experience is a direct result of their internationalization as a *sine qua non* condition of fulfilling their academic function. This is according to the vision expressed in *The Bologna declaration on the European space for higher education: an explanation*, and by the Steering Committee on Higher Education and Research.

A constantly growing number of institutions and individuals dealing with intercultural communication issues evidences on the one hand a very strong need to comprehend other people and, on the other, the challenges of communication in various cultural settings. The European Year of Intercultural Dialogue celebrated in 2008 at the initiative of the Council of Europe was a contribution to promoting the value of intercultural dialogue, a more advanced form of intercultural communication, as an important tool to prevent social exclusion of cultural minorities, both old and new, to develop social solidarity and partnership, social coherence and the sense of citizenship, as well as to generate symbolic capital of the nations. All the efforts, both institutionalized and individual, on global, international, national, regional and local levels are to help people become true citizens of the global village by developing the knowledge, attitudes and skills of a multicultural person (Adler, 1974). This is an ideal towards which all of us should strive as a multicultural speaker is a new individual, a product of the interweaving of cultures. As s/he embodies intellectual and emotional commitment to all human beings and at the same time recognizes, accepts, and appreciates the differences that exist between people, s/he may transcend smoothly a multiplicity of cultural realities. His/her communication success is conceivable only if s/he attempts to understand, facilitate and research the cultural dynamics of other worlds.

1.2 The concept of culture as used in intercultural studies

The concept of culture requires to be viewed from a number of perspectives since scholars have not yet reached any agreement as to how it should be defined in a multicultural environment. The multiple answers which they have provided can often be found to be contradictory,

inconsistent and even confusing as the definitions tend to serve the research purposes of their authors. However, two basic definitions which give lists of individual components of culture can be distinguished. They seem pragmatic and functional because culture is treated as a tool to solve diverse problems. In order to reach a consensus as far as numerous complexities and simplicities of the terms are concerned, several attempts to define culture need to be synthesized; since each view, either linguistic, anthropological or social, offers a myriad of insights into it. The difficulty derives from the nature of culture itself. For the purpose of the present study, I will be predominantly interested in the view of culture that integrates language and culture in a comprehensive and full manner.

In my own perception, culture is the most important concept in anthropology (the study of all aspects of human life, past and present) where it is commonly used to refer to a group of people who live and think in the same ways. Likewise, any group of people who share a common culture and consequently, common rules of behaviour as well as the same form of social organization constitutes a society.

A memorable statement of how language organizes and represents culture is known as the Whorf/Sapir hypothesis which draws upon the previous research by Leonard Bloomfield:

We dissect nature along lines laid down by our native languages. The categories and types that we isolate from the world of phenomena we do not find there because they stare every observer in the face; on the contrary, the world is presented in a kaleidoscopic flux of impressions which has to be organized by our minds – and this means largely by the linguistic systems in our minds. (Bloomfield, 1956: 207)

Referring to the hypothesis, language is understood to be bound up with culture in multiple and complex ways. It is the principal means whereby we conduct our social lives and we use for our communication purposes. The ideas exchanged between speakers can be understood because the interlocutors possess a knowledge store which implies a shared knowledge about the world. The role of the language consists in representing both its users' world views and their cultural identity in a symbolic way proper to their own culture by enabling them to create, explain, and record ideas and information. In turn, culture as a common intellectual and emotional state of all the members of a given speech and culture community, allows for deciphering and understanding the meanings transmitted by language. Thus, language and culture allow the members of a speech and culture community to draw a shared sense of importance and historical continuity embodied in their common customs,

traditions, ideas and, first of all, values. In this way they also serve as markers of their cultural identity.

An attempt to understand culture in a systematic way by means of referring to its value system was successfully undertaken by Clyde Kluckhohn and Florence Strodbeck in the 1960s. Drawing on their research carried out in five distinct speech and culture communities (Spanish American, Native American, Mormons and English speaking settlers of Oklahoma and Texas) they concluded that each culture consists of the same set of values but what makes cultures differ from each other is not the values themselves but their hierarchy. They also postulated that culture plays a very pragmatic function in each speech and culture community where it serves as a tool for solving problems. The above statement is based on three assumptions. Firstly, there is a limited number of human problems to which all cultures must find solutions. Secondly, the limited number of solutions may be charted along a range of variations, and, thirdly, not all solutions are favoured in each culture group to the same extent, although, potentially they are present in every culture.

Consequently, as Henry A. Murray and Clyde Kluckhohn (1953) noticed, intercultural communication could be facilitated by analyzing a given culture-specific orientation to five key aspects of human life, each of which implies specific underlying values: Human Nature (people seen as intrinsically good, evil, or mixed); Man-Nature Relationship (humans should be subordinate to nature, dominant over nature, or live in harmony with it); Time (primary value placed on past/tradition, present/enjoyment, or future/posterity/delayed gratification); Activity (being, becoming/inner development, or doing/striving/industriousness); and Social Relations mainly defined in terms of the locus of power (hierarchical, collateral/collective-egalitarian, or individualistic).

The concept of culture as the totality of human life, including both its spiritual and material aspects was also posited by Susan Stempleski and Barry Tomalin (1993). Moreover, while enumerating the components of culture, they included language among them, which is of some special interest for my analysis.

Culture is defined as patterns of behavior and thinking that people living in social groups learn, create, and share. Culture distinguishes one human group from others. A people's culture includes their beliefs, rules of behavior, language, rituals, art, technology, styles of dress, ways of producing and cooking food, religion, and political and economic systems. (Stempleski and Tomalin, 1993: 25)