

## TECH3501-18 Lecture 011 – Intercultural Communication in a Digital Age

### 1 Introduction – Intercultural Assumptions

“The need to upend our assumptions about the bases of intercultural communication, literally turn our map of the world upside down, and radically reconfigure how we conceptualise, theorise, teach and practice intercultural communication in order to deal with the complexities and challenges of the current age” (Ganesh, Li, & Vaccarino, 2017, p. 355).

“Boston public schools recently announced that they will shift to using world maps based on the Peters projection, reportedly the first time a US public school district has done so. Why? Because the Peters projection accurately shows different countries’ relative sizes. Although it distorts countries’ shapes, this way of drawing a world map avoids exaggerating the size of developed nations in Europe and North America and reducing the size of less developed countries in Asia, Africa and South America.” <http://theconversation.com/five-maps-that-will-change-how-you-see-the-world-74967>

### 2 Digital Era

“The digital era makes intercultural communication simultaneously more easy, on the one hand, and more fraught and complex on the other, and the renewed need for intercultural training” (p.355).

### 3 Eurocentrism

“Scholars continue to grapple with Eurocentrism, in the form of deep assumptions about the nature of individuals, the role of culture and the shape of difference” (p.356).

“[In] Eurocentric research philosophies and traditions... [t]he traditional model assumes individuals are autonomous, independent, stable, consistent, and bounded, and this is incompatible with an alternative model in the rest of the world that suggests that individuals are not independent entities; they are interdependent, well connected with others, with a sense of belonging and affiliation” (p.365).

### 4 Normative Assumptions

“Gergen attributed this incompatibility to the arbitrary labelling of terminology based on Western taken-for-granted normative assumptions, rather than on cultural and ethnographic perspectives” (p.356).

“The understanding of human communication involves multiple cultural perspectives and forces that shape and internalise thoughts and influence behaviour, rather than the normative system or any single theoretical framework that leads to ‘inherited myopia’. To understand a specific cultural framework of its members, it is important to formulate a valid cultural framework with explanatory principles with reference to that culture” (p.256).

#### 4.1 Padmavati: British cinemas that screen new Bollywood blockbuster should be 'burned down', says Hindu nationalist leader

“British cinemas that screen a controversial new Bollywood blockbuster should be burned down, the leader of a hardline Hindu nationalist group has claimed. Cleared for release with a 12A rating by the British Board of Film Classification (BBFC), the historical epic Padmavati, which depicts the life of a legendary 14th century queen Padmini, has become embroiled in a row about its historical accuracy. Members of the Rajput Karni Sena, a group associated with the warrior Rajput caste, claim it misrepresents history by depicting a love affair between the queen and a Muslim invader. The group is further upset that the queen’s midriff is exposed in a song sequence.” <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/hindi-nationalist-leader-calls-for-british-cinemas-showing-bollywood-film-to-be-burned-down-a8072766.html>

### 5 Cultural Studies

“Cultural studies should even invalidate the Eurocentric model based on cultural hegemony and cultural imperialism for three reasons: the global flow of cultural discourse is no longer a one-way traffic, formerly Western hegemonic cultural discourses flowing from the West to the East, from the North to the South, are not longer a

form of domination, and crucially, that Globalisation does not lead to homogenisation of identity only, but also to hybridisation, creolisation, cultural juxtaposing, disjuncture, and fragmentation” (p.357).

## **6 Dichotomous Models**

“Teaching and research in intercultural communication has been dominated by Western models of value orientations that focus on conceptual dichotomies such as Hall’s (1989) model that comprises high versus low contexts, or monochromatic versus polychromatic cultures, and the model of Hofstede (1980) that includes individualism versus collectivism, high versus low power distance, high versus low uncertainty avoidance, and masculine versus femininity” (p.357).

“Several scholars continue to question not only the dichotomisation inherent in these approaches but also the generalisability. In Kim’s (2002) view, ‘individualism and collectivism exist in all cultures and ... individuals hold both individualistic and collectivistic values’ at both individual and cultural levels. She observed that even in highly individualistic Western cultures, the behaviour of most people does not fit the prevailing theoretical descriptions: they may not be self-reliant, self-confident, independent, and self-sufficient” (p.357).

“If there are differences in communication, these differences are situationally and idiosyncratically determined. They do not fall squarely into the value orientation patterns promulgated by either Hall or Hofstede” (p.358).

“The dichotomous Western-centric models therefore need to be challenged. These models assume that cultural values, interpretations, and meanings are strictly attached to a physical place, or nation, or country; moreover, that they are static” (p.358).

## **7 Localism & Globalisation**

“The boundary of local and global is continuously changing and being blurred in the process of accelerated globalisation. One can simultaneously identify with the local and global ‘cultural processes of integration and disintegration, which are independent of inter-state relations,’ and thus take on hybrid identities such as diasporas” (p.358).

### **7.1 Have We Reached the end of Globalization?**

<https://youtu.be/zkT8RY4Xd4>

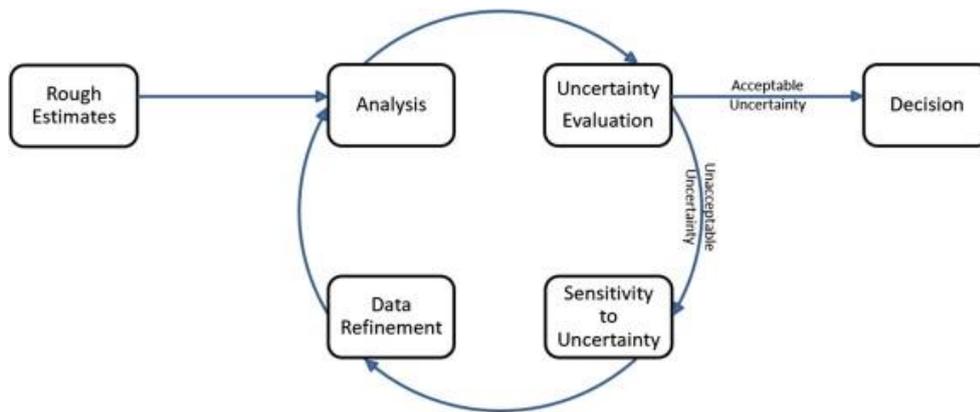
## **8 Uncertainty**

“Barker was certain that these processes of cultural flows are filled with uncertainties, chaos, contingencies, and disorder, rather than order, stability, systematicity, and linear determinations and patterns” (p.358).

“We should jump out of the trap of Hall’s and Hofstede’s models that sees culture as place-bound, stable, consistent, and over-generalised” (p.358).

“Kim (2002) pointed out that cultural studies should take into consideration cultural synergy that enables researchers to change their mind-sets by transcending their cultural blind spots, constraints, and the concepts of hegemony, and be being exposed to different cultural values, traditions, ideologies, perceptual frameworks and philosophies” (p.358).

“Barker (2002) argued that in cultural studies, there is no universal transcendental truth; ‘truth is culture-bound, contingent and specific to the historical and cultural conditions of its production.’ He insisted that ‘cultural studies should not understand theory as a grand narrative but as a local tool’ to examine the democratic pluralist tradition that accommodates value differences, diversity, and liberty” (p.358).



<http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S036083521730311X>

## 9 Beyond Binaries

“Cultural studies should undo ‘the binaries of Western philosophy’ involving the dismantling of hegemonic theoretical models and conceptual hierarchical oppositions such as individualism versus collectivism, high context versus low context cultures, and monochronic and polychronic cultures so as to explore their blind spots, constraints, and irrationalities” (p.358).

“Students who campaigned for the English curriculum at Cambridge University to be “decolonised” are now turning their attention to other subjects including history, philosophy and history of art. Activists behind the ‘Decolonise Cambridge’ movement said that they intend to set up groups that will press for changes to the curriculum in several other subjects.” <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/2017/10/25/cambridge-university-subjects-face-decolonisation-campaigns/>

“Decolonisation of education remains important and relevant. Oxford University’s recent move to include a history paper on non-European history was one small step in the right direction. In my own department, sociology, initiatives to diversify curricula led by Dr Mónica Moreno Figueroa and others were met with praise and support from the student body.” <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/oct/25/decolonise-cambridge-university-row-attack-students-colour-lola-olufemi-curriculums>

“The University of Cambridge's English faculty is taking steps to "decolonise" the curriculum in response to a student campaign. Academics at the world-leading university met at a teaching forum earlier this month, where they agreed to "actively [seek] to ensure the presence of BME (black and minority ethnic) texts and topics on lecture lists".” <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/education/cambridge-university-moves-to-decolonise-english-literature-curriculum-a3667231.html>

## 10 Base Positions

“Traditionally, scholars in intercultural communication have tended to work with four bases of culture: race, ethnicity, nationality and language, each of which has begun to become increasingly problematic in the current era” (p.359).

“In the past, people were classified and divided into racial groups on the basis of various biological and physical characteristics, which generally resulted from genetic ancestry” (p.359).

## 11 Race

“The concept of race is now recognised as being ‘constructed in fluid social and historical contexts,’ and therefore not biologically essential or rigid. It is perfectly reasonable for people to identify with multiple races” (p.359).

The much-loved cartoon series has been around for close to 30 years, but in this age of hypersensitivity and identity politics, where victimhood is worn like a badge of honour, The Simpsons has been found wanting. <http://www.heraldsun.com.au/news/opinion/rita-panahi/the-simpsons-is-another-victim-of-hypersensitivity-and-identity-politics/news-story/845cc2c93c3a86421d42d2a895f21d00>

### 11.1 The Problem With Apu - Official Trailer | truTV

<https://youtu.be/zGzvEqBvkP8>

## 12 Ethnicity

"Ethnicity refers to a group or groups that people identify with or feel they have a sense of belonging and affiliation. Members identify with each other based on their common or shared cultural experiences and contexts. From a static, assigned category, however, like race, ethnicity is becoming a more fluid and dynamic construct. Individuals can self-identify with a particular ethnic group where they feel a sense of shared common origins, such as customs, culture, religion, or language" (p.359).

### Hollywood Producers Wanted to Whitewash Crazy Rich Asians

"In a recent interview with Entertainment Weekly, Crazy Rich Asians author Kevin Kwan shared the story of how his novel became a movie – and the roadblocks along the way. One of those roadblocks, unsurprisingly, was the Hollywood instinct to whitewash. One producer approached Kwan with the idea of transforming the protagonist Rachel into a white woman. "That was their strategy," he told EW. "They wanted to change the heroine into a white girl. I was like, 'Well, you've missed the point completely.' I said, 'No, thank you.'"

<https://www.themarysue.com/hollywood-whitewash-crazy-rich-asians-movie/>

### 12.1 Ed Skrein leaves HELLBOY after Whitewashing Controversy

<https://youtu.be/lvzE7EpbfRY>

## 13 Language

"Language is a central part of our identity and our culture as it reflects and constructs our values and helps us mark our social and cultural boundaries. Language is an important tool that humans use to construct and exchange meaning with others, and our culture aids in the construction of meaning" (p.359).

"Liu, et al. (2011) add that language is a cultural tool that needs to be placed within its social context in order for it to be understood. The preferred communication style of a particular culture is also reflected in their language use." (p.359).

### 13.1 Steve Coogan attacks Top Gear trio over racism

Comedian Steve Coogan attacks Top Gear presenters Jeremy Clarkson, James May and Richard Hammond for their "casual racism". <https://youtu.be/m4T-MAH577c>

## 14 Nationality

"Nationality is the fourth popular base for studies of intercultural communication. It could refer to an ethnic group of people with a shared culture, language or identity, but not defined by political borders. However, nationality can also refer to the legal relationship between an individual and a particular country, nation, or state. It can be an individual's country of birth or another country where that individual has citizenship" (p.359).

### 14.1 Don't Mention the War! - Fawly Towers – BBC

<https://youtu.be/yfl6Lu3xQW0>

## 15 Differences

"International and intercultural differences should be understood as related but distinct constructs" (p.360).

"We suggest that the focus on race, ethnicity, language and nationality as bases for intercultural communication is as much a product of the dichotomised and Eurocentric traditions as anything else, and therefore if we want to move beyond Eurocentrism's, we need to shift and expand our understanding of the bases upon which cultures form" (p.360).

## **16 Subcultures & Countercultures**

"In recent years, scholars, particularly feminist researchers, have begun to look at how different categories such as age, race and gender intersect in various ways to produce unique cultures, subcultures and countercultures. In the current age, such intersections are both mobilised and accentuated by digital cultures (which itself is a basis for identity formation), so it is worth discussing digital and social media in some detail, as the implications for intercultural communication are immense" (p.360).

## **17 Technological Advancement**

"With the advancement of technology and communications and the rapid development of new social media, there is a more intimate connection and the rapid development of new social media, there is a more intimate connection with 'wired cities,' 'virtual communities,' and 'cyber-communities.' Anderson (2006) notes that 'people are re-forming into thousands of cultural tribes of interest, connected less by geographic proximity and workplace chatter than by shared interests'" (p.361).

### **17.1 Do Africans shop online?**

Africans are increasingly shopping online as they spend more time on their phones and less time in front of the television, listening to the radio or reading newspapers. This means that brands and retailers will have to re-think the way they do business with Africans. <http://www.popimedia.com/do-africans-shop-online/>

## **18 Digital Interconnections**

"With the compression of time and space, individuals from various parts of the world can connect and interact with each other within seconds using a range of interconnected digital devices, as they are now free of 'the constraints of physical proximity and spatial mobility'" (p.361).

"With its digital, interactive, and virtual nature, social media has become part of the everyday lives of many 21<sup>st</sup> century citizens. Chen (2012) points out that this new media 'has brought human interaction and society to a highly interconnected and complex level'" (p.361).

## **19 Sense of Community**

"Intercultural communication constitutes a very significant component of this interconnected complexity as new media challenges 'the very existence of intercultural communication in its traditional sense,' and also affects how individuals from different cultures subsequently encounter each other. Socially, culturally and digitally, globalisation has had a substantial impact on individuals' sense of community" (p.361).

## **20 Globalisation**

"According to Chen and Zhang (2010), globalisation 'has redefined the meaning of community with a new look at inclusiveness and collective sense of identity.' Globalisation processes, including social media and digital communication, have introduced new possibilities to include individuals and communities in intercultural as well as international communication. These new possibilities also challenge traditional ways of understanding culture" (p.361).

### **20.1 Michael Ignatieff on globalisation, Brexit and Trump - BBC Newsnight**

[https://youtu.be/HZAtq\\_Nsrn8](https://youtu.be/HZAtq_Nsrn8)

## **21 Information Exchange**

"With increased possibilities of exchange information and knowledge globally, 'new forms of intercultural communication are being developed; new cultural identities are being (re)created and (re)defined through the impact of cultural diversity in the digital domain'" (p.361).

"If the basis upon which cultures are forming are multiplying, intersecting and accelerating, how do we apprehend and deal with these new challenges?" (p.362).

### **21.1 Marshall McLuhan - The World is a Global Village (CBC TV)**

<https://youtu.be/HeDnPP6ntic>

## **22 Navigating Cultural Differences**

“In order to navigate cultural differences, similarities and flux, individuals continue to need to become culturally competent” (p.362).

### **22.1 GLOBAL RELATIONSHIPS: Meeting the parents**

<https://youtu.be/6vhkyZzz98s>

## **23 Cultural Competence**

“Wilson, et al. (2013) defined cultural competence as ‘the acquisition and maintenance of culture-specific skills required to (a) function effectively within a new cultural context and/or (b) interact effectively with people from different cultural backgrounds’” (p.362).

“Bennett (2008) defines becoming competent as acquiring ‘a set of cognitive, affective, and behavioural skills and characteristics that support effective and appropriate interaction in a variety of cultural contexts’” (p.362).

## **24 Mindset-Heartset-Skillset**

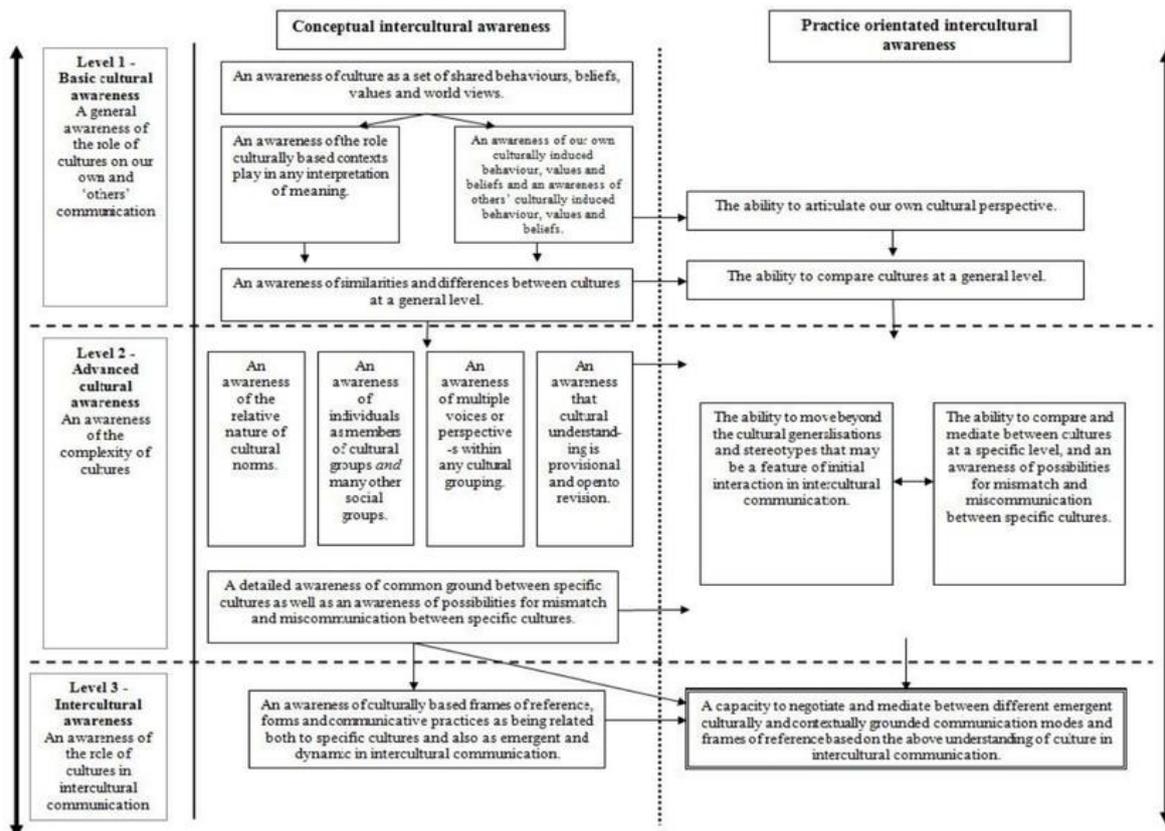
“Mindset refers to, inter alia, knowledge and one’s awareness of operating within a particular cultural context, culture-general and culture-specific knowledge, frameworks, worldviews, values, and norms; and heartset refers to attitudes, motivation, openness, tolerance of ambiguity, and flexibility. Skillset refers to abilities or repertoire of behaviour, including gathering appropriate information, listening, adapting, building relationships, managing social interactions, and empathising” (p.362).

## **25 Intercultural Needs**

“There is a growing need for citizens in all parts of the world to receive intercultural communication training. Intercultural communication training should raise awareness about the bases of cultural formation and their relationships with the construction of different cultural norms, break down cultural barriers, and increase self-awareness and communication skills when engaging with individuals from other cultures” (p.362).

## **26 Functional Awareness**

“Pusch, et al. (1981) pointed out that one of the historical purposes of intercultural training has been to ‘provide a functional awareness of the cultural dynamic present in intercultural relations and assist trainees in becoming more effective in cross-cultural situations.’ Through intercultural communication training, individuals should be able to ‘integrate alternate frames of reference’ into their lives in order to function more effectively in the global village and thus move away from a Eurocentric orientation” (p.362).



<https://www.researchgate.net/figure/233471720> fig1 Figure-1-A-model-of-intercultural-awareness

## 27 Attitudes & Dispositions

“Ward (2004) maintained that cultural knowledge and cultural attitude are not adequate to prepare individuals to deal with a range of intercultural situations, and she recommends that intercultural communication programmes should include social skills in order to bring about behavioural changes” (p.363).

### 27.1 Cross cultural communication | Pellegrino Riccardi | TEDxBergen

This talk was given at a local TEDx event, produced independently of the TED Conferences. Pellegrino, being a cross cultural expert, he is sharing with us his personal and professional experience about how do very different cultures can successfully coexist next to each other. Is it difficult to live in Norway, being an expat? Do you know how to establish the mutual understanding between Italian and Norwegian? <https://youtu.be/YMyof-REc5Jk>

## 28 Vital Ingredients

“Bennett’s (2008) mindset, heartset, and skillset approach to intercultural competence contains the vital ingredients that need to be integrated into any intercultural communication training programme as ‘knowledge, attitude and behaviour must work together for development to occur’” (p.363).

### 28.1 Pet Shop Boys - Single – Bilingual

<https://youtu.be/huHIKtow878>

## 29 References

Ganesh, S., Li, M., & Vaccarino, F. (2017). The Basis for Intercultural Communication in a Digital Era. In S. M. Croucher (Ed.), *Global Perspectives on Intercultural Communication*. London: Routledge.