Integrated Process Model on Intercultural Competence

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Abstract: The paper proposes an Integrated Model on Intercultural Competence, which attempts to present Intercultural Communication and Competence from the term point of the dialectical approach, described by Martin and Nakayama (Martin, J., Th.Nakayama, 2010). The suggested concept deploys from previously developed and accepted models, both structure-oriented and process-oriented. At the same time it replies to the principles of the 'Theory of Models' as outlined by Balboni and Caon (Balboni, Caon, 2014. In the near future, the model will be applied to assess Intercultural Competence of cross-border project teams, working under the CBC program between Romania – Bulgaria 2007-2014.

Keywords: intercultural; competence; model; dialectic

1. Introduction

The paper uses the term "Model" in the meaning of "Conceptual Model", which often relates with "Theory". Until recently most of the theories in Intercultural Communication and Competence were mainly verbal or descriptive. During the last 30 years, there have been different attempts to shift to a more schematic approach to describing phenomena, which resulted in schemes that are valid on a purely logical basis, independent from empirical measurability.

Following this tradition, the paper proposes such a Model on Intercultural Competence, which meets the principles of "The Theory of Models", by Alfred Tarski as outlined by Balboni and Caon (Balboni & Caon, 2014). The suggested concept integrates some of the ideas incorporated in the Performance-Oriented Model of Intercultural Communicative Competence, introduced by Balboni and Caon (Balboni & Caon, 2014) as well as in the Process – Oriented Model of Deardorff (Deardorff, 2006).

With the above said in mind, the search for such a model is generated by the dialectical approach to Intercultural Communication and Competence, described by Martin and Nakayama (Martin, &Nakayama, 2010), which emphasizes the processual, relational and contradictory nature of interactions.

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2. Related Work

The paper acknowledges the great number of studies on Intercultural Competence (IC), including concepts, which propose a methodology to assess it mainly. Some of these theories and their relevant models were designed for specific professional fields, namely Byram's Model of Intercultural Communicative Competence (1997) for teaching purposes or Bennett's Intercultural Development Inventory (Bennett, 1998) for describing the stages of a training process.

For the presented model, the article follows some ideas from Balboni and Caon (Balboni & Caon, 2014) as well as from Deardorff (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2008).

3. Problem Statement

The paper attempts to define such a model of IC, which not only gives an answer to the question "What does it take to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations", but applies the dialectical approach to the analysis of intercultural competence and communication (Martin & Nakayama, 2010). As described by the mentioned authors, this specific perspective implies three major paradigms: 1) focus on the process; 2) consideration of relational aspect of intercultural communication and link with intercultural competence; 3) simultaneous discussion of controversial ideas.

Also the suggested model needs to meet the Principles of the "Model Theory" by Alfred Tarksi as outlined in the paper on "Performance-Oriented Model of Intercultural Communicative Competence"(Balboni & Caon, 2014)

4. Concepts

4.1. The concept of "Communicative Competence"

Currently, if the words "model" and "communicative competence" are googled together, the search will find a pile of conceptualized models on various competences related with culture. In fact the study of Intercultural Competence became the focus of scientific research by the mid 90s, whenthe academics accepted the concept of Dell Hymes for communicative competence instead of the term used by Chomsky language/linguistic competence (Balboni & Caon, 2014). The accepted change meant a shift from prioritizing the "knowledge of language, grammar of the language" to "using these grammars within the communicative event"(Balboni & Caon, 2014). This approach expresses the understanding that knowledge of the language alone is not sufficient for effective communication, the latter requires additional skills.

4.2. The "Theory of Models"

As far as models are concerned, we should point out some of the underlining principles ofthe "Theory of Models", introduced by the Polish philosopher Alfred Tarski, outlined in by Balboni and Caon (Balboni & Caon, 2014). Tarski is reported to define "a model as a true, therefore perpetually valid, interpretation of a linguistic or of a mathematical formulation" (Balboni & Caon, 2014).

Based on this theory, the authors specify the following cornerstones of a model:

• "A model is a structure that includes all possible manifestations of the described phenomenon" (Balboni & Caon, 2014). For example, if we talk about a model of intercultural competence, this model should be applied to the description of competence in any high-context or low-context cultures, during any cultural encouters and at any time.

• Models might be complex (and have heirarchial layers in depth) or basic (no layers). In heirarchial complex models, presenting complicated phenomena, each layer downward describes less complex concepts, presented as model components. This top-down layer approach can be reversed to bottom-up structuring by using simple components (basic models), which interact in a heirarchial order to form connected layers and build up a more complex construct.

• "Models are based on declarations and procedures" (Balboni & Caon, 2014). Declarative rules describe the pillars of the model in a declarative way by using a statement or a term. When these rules interact they produce procedures and relevant results, which can be described by using the construct: "if..... then...". (Balboni & Caon, 2014).

• In theoretical sciences, models produce declaratory knowledge (which is self-referential), in operational sciences they produce procedural' (Balboni & Caon, 2014). For example, the model of Intercultural Communicative Competence by Balboni and Caon might be used by behavioural sciences to analyse how and what stages are needed to pass through in order to generate a culturally-competent behavior. At the same time it can be used to discuss the components of "Cultural values".

• Diagrams are used to visually present the models in order to reduce linguistic ambiguity. They consist of the so-called "icons" or "boxes", which acquire a previously prescribed meaning to become non-ambiguous. Thus they activate three different forms of intelligence: the logical-formal, the linguistic, and the spatial intelligences (Balboni & Caon, 2014), which definitely descreases the possibility of misinterpretation and ambiguity.

According to Balboni and Caon, (Balboni & Caon, 2014) each model should meet three basic requirements:

- Economy -It should use the minimum possible icons or boxes so that it can be easily remembered and applied. This comes to say that the top level of the model should be simple, while each component should provide for further examination and explanation, similar to the "drop-down" menues used in software (Balboni & Caon, 2014).

- Reliability - The reliability of a model is determined by the accuracy of the information contained therein, i.e. the model must be correct. As the authors state: "This is why empirically validated models are no longer the only models to be considered reliable, as validation or falsification of a model's reliability can be logical prior to be empirically possible." (Balboni & Caon, 2014). This comes to say that confirmation of the validity of the model can be performed using formal logic, which doesn't exclude empirical tests.

- Simple structure, hierarchy in case of a complex phenomenon - The structure of the model should be simplified so as to facilitate its application especially in such a pragmatic-oriented scientific field as intercultural communication. This requirement sets the number of the boxes to be no more than seven, the diagram links to be logical and to secure easy-to-follow tracking process. It also prescribes complicated models to be presented by in-depth structures.

4.3. Discussed Models of Intercultural Competence

The paper dicusses two such models, selected based on their coherence with the above described principles.

4.3.1. Balboni and Caon's Model of Intercultural Communicative Competence

The first one (Figure1) is the Performance-Oriented Model of Intercultural Communicative Competence', introduced by Balboni and Caon (Balboni & Caon, 2014). It uses the term "communicative competence" proposed by Hymes (1972), the model of "communicative competence in a language" as well as the model for "monitoring the critical points in intercultural communication"(Balboni & Caon, 2014).

It is based on the dichotomy of "Mind, competence" and "World, performance", presented by the general division into two main separate but related modules. This approach allows viewing "language", "extra-linguistic codes" and "cultural values" as components of the mental constructs and "communicative events" as behaviourial manifestation interlinked by "language and behavioural abilities". These declarative rules are visualised through four boxes and one circle ("communicative events"). The most complex element in this diagram is the central box, where there are not only language abilities (cognitive processes) and skills (the implementation of abilities), but also the abilities and skills of appropriate behaviour in Intercultural Communication, which were proposed by Fabio Caon as a qualifying aspect of Intercultural Communicative Competence (Balboni & Caon

2010). In the diagram this box takes a middle position between the dichotomy of "Mind, competence" and "World, performance". The "Communicative events" are situated in the module "World, performance" to demonstrate their objective existence but linked with the "Language abilities, Behaviour abilities" to show the point where intercultural communication happens. The operational rules are presented by double pointed arrows to indicate how the separate components connect and mutually impact each other.

Following is the analysis of the model against the model theory requirements as described above:

- Economy -The model has an economic structure, consisting of five elements, four of which are homomorphic (have similar shapes) but connect with one heteromorphic element. Such economic layout makes the model easy to track and remember.

- Simple structure - The square units (boxes) represent complex homogeneous databases with theoretical knowledge which needs further explanation. The arrows indicate that the rules take effect when communication events happen. The shape of the box "Communication events" is different because it is heterogeneous and includes a variety of events arising from the law (ie arrows left) and cultural norms that characterize different types of events such as meetings, dinners, group work, lectures, etc. (Balboni & Caon, 2010). At the same time the model is structured in layers and provides for examination of the boxes' content additionally as these components are designed as a drop-down menu, listing the sub-components of the "grammar". Hence each of the boxes can be further studied separately to clarify the relevant contents.

- Reliability - The reliability of the model can be estimated with empirical observation during any communication event (Balboni & Caon, 2010).

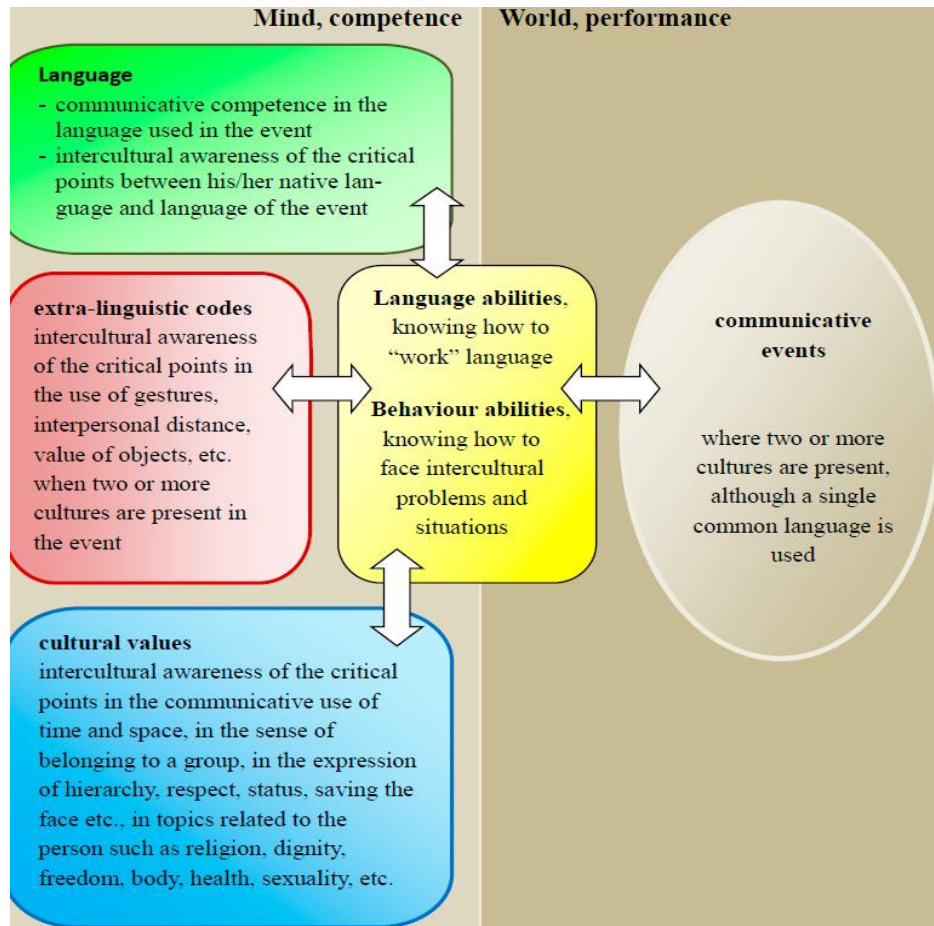**Figure 1. Intercultural Communicative Competence (Balboni & Caon, 2014)**

4.3.2. The Process-oriented model

The second discussed concept is that of Deardorff (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2008), presenting "the acquisition of intercultural competence as a continuous, dynamic process and one that involves diverse dimensions while developing and enriching itself" (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2008, p. 7). As stated in Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2008, "leading US intercultural experts have reached consensus upon this definition". Figure 2 uses the diagram from the publication "Intercultural Competence – The key competence in the 21st century?". It is presented in the form of a spiral where intercultural competence moves through different dimensions upwards, while developing and enriching.
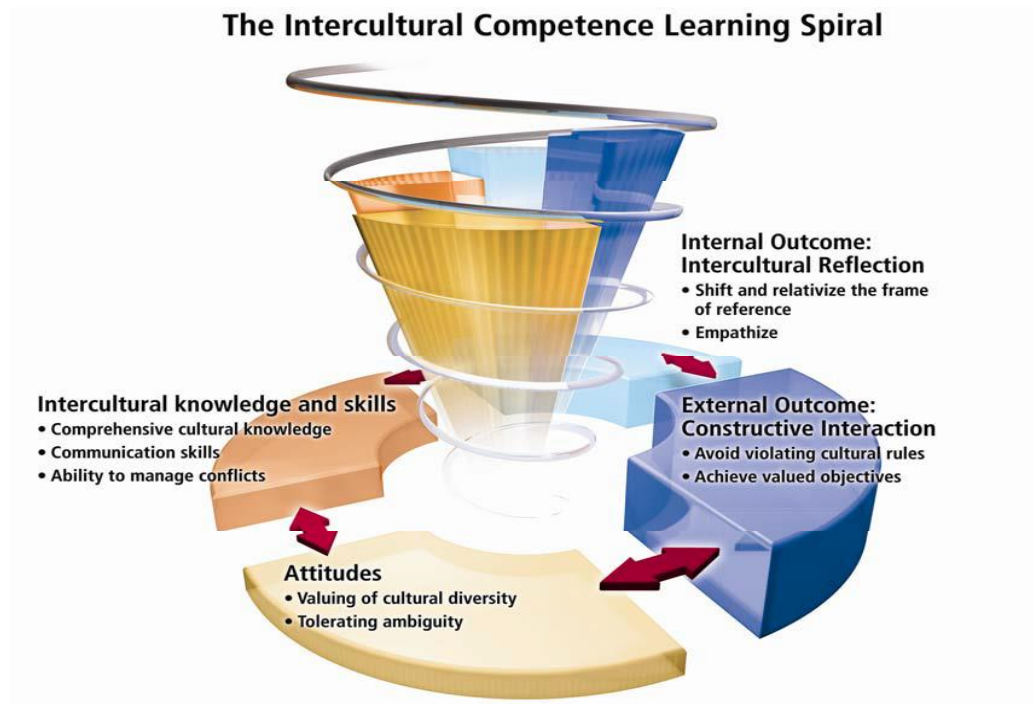
**Figure 2. The Spiral Model of Intercultural Competence in the publication
"Intercultural Competence – The key competence in the 21st century?"**

Now we can analyse the model against the model theory requirements as described above:

• Economy - The model has economic structure of four components.

• Simple structure- There are only four homogeneous boxes, named: "Attitudes", "Intercultural knowledge and skills", "Internal outcome – intercultural reflection", and "External outcome – constructive interaction". These components are further detailed by drop – down menus enlisting the subcomponents. Thus they state for the declarative rules in the concept. The connections between them produce the operational rules in the form of a spiral (staging process), meaning that the acquisition of intercultural competence requires lifelong learning and is part of an ongoing personal development. According to this model, the more sub-components are acquired or developed, the greater the likelihood of a higher level of intercultural competence as a result (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2008).

Especially interesting point in this concept is the focus on the results from the staging process of intercultural communication, traced on two levels. First as an "Internal outcome" for the individual who through intercultural reflection can achieve positive "External outcome", resulting in constructive dialogue, problem solving and achieving the objectives of the communication event and motivated by that to further develop "Attitudes" and "Intercultural knowledge and skills".

- Reliability - To prove its reliability, the author has tested the model and the results are presented in the paper Identification and Assessment of Intercultural Competence as a Student Outcome of Internationalization, Journal of Studies in International Education Fall 2006 10: 241-266.

5. Solution Approach

The suggested Integrated Process Model of Intercultural Competence applies dialectical approach to the analysis of intercultural communication (Martin & Nakayama, 2010) with its three major paradigms:

a. Focus on the process

This focus on the process is demonstrated by presenting a flowchart diagram, incorporating boxes of different shapes for the different model components and arrows for their linkages, which lead forward and backward to indicatie continuity in the communication process. The visualization of the latter deploys from Deardorff's Process-oriented model and by using arrows connects the internal and external outcomes showing how through reflection and evaluation, the outcomes enrich the staging process. The evaluation of the external outcome is the visible result of the current stageand in case of effective intercultural discourse should produce an externally evaluated outcome,indicated by an arrow leading outside of the process. Hence, the arrows function as operational rules, meaning:

"*If intercultural competence, as a set of competences, including the competence over the "grammar" of verbal and non-verbal codes and cross-cultural values, is performed in the communication process, then it produces outcomes, externally evaluated and personally reflected on and enriches those same codes and cross-cultural values".*

b. Relational aspect

The adoption of the relational approach assumes that cross-cultural knowledge is of high importance for an effective intercultural communication. Therefore, the proposed model uses the box "cross-cultural values" instead of the box "cultural values" in Balboni's model.

c. Simultaneous discussion of controversial ideas

This paradigm accepts that "reality can be at once external and internal, that human behavior is predictable and creative and changeable" (Martin & Nakayama, 2010). In the model it is incorporated by the dichotomy between "Mind-Construct" and "World–Performance", which is visualised by the dotted lines between them.These modules allow to analyse Intercultural Competence both as a construct and as a performance without contradicting the process approach. Hence the box "Intercultural competence as a set of competences" can be defined as the competence that is needed to transfer professional, strategic, social and personal competence areas into the specific communication event, to follow Bolten's "Acting competence model", for example. (Bolten, 2007, pp. 25-26).

Also the paradigm for "simultaneous discussion of controversial ideas"provides for considering the communication in a seemingly homogenous group, consisitng of people from one and the same national culture and using a common language, to be viewed as intercultural communication between different cultural groups. Such an approach allows the communication between men and women, ethnic minorities and mainstream, people from different social layers or professions to be also considered as Intercultural and hence the need of Intercultural competence. In the proposed model of intercultural competence this notion is presented by the box "cross-cultural values".The latter implies the idea of "the invisible cultural backpack" (Бузера, 2012) as a database of knowledge on cultural values, which can be used depending on the cultural characterisitcs of the communication event.

In practice, this model becomes applicable to the analysis of intercultural competence and communication regardless of the language and belonging to a specific cultural group.
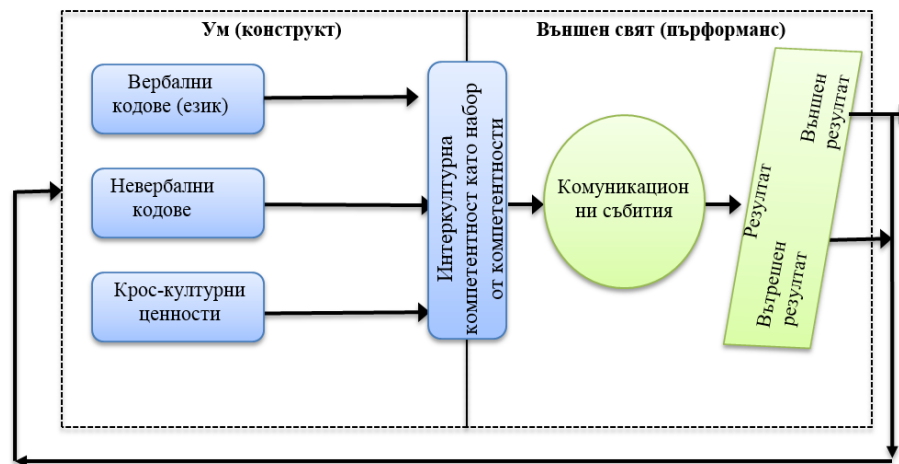

Figure 3. Integrated process model of Intercultural Competence

Now the paper analyzes the model against the priniciples of the "Theory of Models", as outlined in (Balboni & Caon 2010):

• Economy - There are seven boxes, four of which are homomorphic (have similar rectangular shapes, which represent databases in the flowchart modelling) in the Module "Mind – Construct". The fifth box is a is a heteromorphic element (a circle to reperesent an iterative process) and part of the module "World – Performance". The other heteromorphic element is the box "Outcome", viisualised viaa parallelogram to present displaying data in accordance with the flowchart modelling.

• Simple – The model uses rectangular boxes that represent databases with theoretical knowledge or the "grammar" and thus are homogeneous in nature. It also incorporates a circle "Communication events" to indicate an on-going communication process as well as a parallelogram to present "Outcomes" of the process. These components are the declarative rules, the pillars of the model. The operational rules are described via arrows to show the direction of the process. For example,just like in Deardorff's model, the "Internal outcome" through intercultural reflection leads to the accumulation in the database and this process is indicated by the arrow leading from the end to the beginning of the model.

• In-depth structure - Each of these components can be further explained with drop-down menus as in Balboni's model.

6. Future Work

The suggested model will be applied to analyse the dialectic in intercultural communication process and intercultural competence of Romanian-Bulgarian cross-border team members, who participated in the Romania – Bulgaria CBC Program 2007-2014.

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