

Exploitation of Schemata in Persuasive  
and Manipulative Discourse  
in English, Polish and Russian



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By

Anna Kuzio

**CAMBRIDGE  
SCHOLARS**

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P U B L I S H I N G

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# INTRODUCTION

Creating intercultural communicative competence appears to be a complex process as it requires the need to save one's own identity in the face of change while concurrently validating the identity of the other that seems to be difficult. Cultural anthropologists and sociologists have previously worked to identify culture dimensions that can be widespread to the members of a given group based on that group's attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors (Hofstede 1986). These culture dimensions are defined by, among other things, a culture's views of self and others; connections to nature, time, and truth; as well as attitudes towards autonomy and gender roles (Brislin, Cushner and Young 1986; Cole and Bruner 1971; Hofstede 1986; Scollon and Scollon 1995). As culture by definition is both shared as well as learnt, cultural dimensions can be linked with large groups of people. With the aim of making these generalizations, groups are studied with as much objectivity as possible, and recognized, taking into account their attributes, as homogenous or as a combination of cultural dimensions, for instance doing/being, masculine/feminine, high context/low context or individualist/collectivist. Comprehending even one aspect of culture, such as individualist/collectivist, can help those aiming to communicate across belief and value systems to be comprehended and accepted. Individualist cultures are those defined by the importance of the self.

The first part aims at discussing the aspect that culture can be perceived as a dynamic process; one that is shaped by interaction across cultures, politics, economics as well as social change (Samovar, Porter and McDaniel 2007: 16). Because of this, it is significant to not only understand the theoretical foundation of cultural identification, but also the practical operation of culture in life. As a result of the changing nature of the latter, and given the dynamic nature of culture itself, a cultural insider seems to be frequently required to identify as well as interpret information cues (Hofstede 1986).

Theory in the field of intercultural communication postulates that a variety of aspects of culture dimensions have a direct effect on communication between individuals and groups, and such effects can give rise to miscommunication. Even in the presence of common goals and contexts, communication as a process is often impacted negatively by the cognitive or cultural filters of those concerned. Attention to the application

of cultural models of communication that are perceived to be of great importance from the practical point of view is given.

The second part of the book emphasizes the aspects that are recognized to posit difficulties in conveying messages from one culture to another. The notions of schemata, frames, scenarios and cultural scripts are outlined. This part is devoted to the broadly understood concept of cultural scripts. Yet, there exist very few sustained sociological examinations of perception. In this section the perceptual aspect of the social creation of reality by examining perception as a method of 'socio-mental filtration' will be highlighted. Grounded on theories of social construction – particularly those employing the ideas of schema, frames and cultural scripts in which social expectations are viewed as the classifying device of experience, the problem of perception occurrence will be given special attention. Frame analysis has been frequently used by scholars to analyze discourses as well as the ability to comprehend people's perception of the world. Scholars from a range of disciplines use the terms 'frames', 'scenario', 'schemata' as well as 'cultural scripts' interchangeably to illustrate a range of incompatible concepts concerning one's subconscious understanding of the world.

The aim of this part is to examine a range of ideas concerning the issue of the aforementioned found in the writings of authors, for instance Erving Goffman, Teun van Dijk, George Lakoff, Minsky, David Snow, and others. This part suggests the theoretical situations for describing these mental structures as structures of discourse which people use to make sense of the information that is encountered. Furthermore, this part of the thesis demonstrates the need to include society, which offers patterns for comprehending social relations. These concepts develop in parallel with language, and differ across cultures, but seem to be different from other extra-linguistic discourse forms, comprising for instance ideologies.

Moreover, in the context of making decisions, most people tend to follow a particular sequence as regards decision making. It is frequent to begin by establishing what one wants and how to obtain it, and only when one has reflected over this preliminary stage the decisions of 'what action to take and what choice to make' are considered. This seems to be different from an analytic approach, where one examines what is chosen and then how it interferes with what was sought and expected. In addition to establishing the goals which guide decisions, people seem to hinge on cognitive shortcuts to lessen the information processing burden of decision making (Moskowitz 2005: 142). It should also be noted that an individual appears to have an "over-mastering tendency simply to get a general impression of the whole, and, on the basis of this, (...) construct[s] the

probable details” (Bartlett 1932: 206) which increases the probability of making bad choices which are based on a poor impression of reality.

The third part examines some principles of critical discourse analysis, for instance socio-political attitude as well as a concentration on the notion of power relations by groups while they are being performed, legitimated by text as well as speech. The fundamental element of this analysis seems to be the relations between power and discourse. Theoretically it is exposed that with the aim of being able to relate power as well as discourse in a precise way, an individual needs the so-called ‘cognitive interface’ of models, knowledge, attitudes as well as ideologies and other social representations of the social mind. The following section also contains a review of current research on politeness, so that the current analysis is located within the broader realm of politeness theory.

This part also describes the concept of persuasion as well as persuasive communication. It gives the overview of persuasion definitions, describes models of persuasion and factors influencing general persuasibility, namely: source, message and receiver factors. In addition, there is a section devoted to the rhetorical roots of persuasion and some remarks on the concepts crucial to the theory of argumentation. The notion that society and most conversations are founded upon a basement of truth has been one of the central ideas fueling most of deceptive communication research. Moreover, prior cross-cultural research regarding cultural orientation suggests that the moral preoccupation with truth is, in fact, a cultural-specific phenomenon, and that regard for the concept of morality indeed varies across cultural boundaries. The problem discussed in this section is communication and how it is exploited to affect the behavior of those who are subjected to particular messages that are formulated using determined techniques intended to influence and persuade.

The fourth part of the book is analytic. Attention is given to various discourses one encounters in everyday conversations. Attention is given to the examination of various kinds of discourse, for instance, complimenting as well as political discourse. Essentially, this part argues that different kinds of discourses can be a subtle (or, perhaps, not so subtle) way of manipulation with people who are socially and culturally determined. It also indicates that various means used in the communication process can be a powerful medium that overwhelmingly appeals and speaks to definite groups in society.

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

Human beings have a great need to be with people who are similar to themselves. This is because they share the same ways of doing things, the same values, as well as function by similar rules. When one is with people who tend to be similar to oneself, the ways of doing things just seem like common sense. However, sometimes one realizes that the situation appears to be more complex. When this happens one realizes that the issues that have been taken for granted about human interaction are not necessarily the same for everyone. The aim of this part of the dissertation is to elucidate what happens in the process of communication when people with different cultural backgrounds experience other cultures. The emphasis is also given to the issue of interaction between people from various cultures.

In the following sections, the history of intercultural communication is reviewed and several theories are discussed that demonstrate the range of options available to researchers, for instance theories proposed by Edward T. Hall, Gudykunst and Kim and Stella Ting-Toomey. Attention is also given to Ron Scollon and Suzanne Wong Scollon's discourse analysis approach as well as examination within the ethnographic tradition by Dell Hymes.

### **Definitions of culture**

Among the concepts covered by the term 'intercultural communication', definitely the most complicated and indeterminate seems to be the concept of 'culture'. With the aim of 'grounding' the vast range of theories of intercultural communication, it seems to be vital to notice how this notion is made use of. Ideas of culture show a discrepancy in the literature in accordance with how it is described, and how much explanatory power the definition has. Culture can be regarded as a human creation (Freire 1970: 10). It is also viewed as an integral part of the human environment (Peterson 2004: 17) as it comprises "what people think, what they do, or how they feel."

At a deeper level, culture can be recognized as all the ways in which people live and think in the world. Clifford Geertz (1973: 216) views culture as “the shared patterns that set the tone, character, and quality of people’s lives.” James Banks (1994: 82) defines culture as mainly consisting of the intangible symbolic and ideational aspect of society; for example, values, symbols, interpretations that distinguish one group of people from another. Taking these concepts into account, it is visible that culture should be considered dynamic, complex and changing as well as perceived as a whole, rather than a ‘composition’ of discrete parts.

Widening the social anthropology idea of culture as a mental program, Geert Hofstede (1984: 51) identifies culture as “the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one category of people from another.” These mental programs refer to approved ways of performing actions, and vary in relation to the level of uniqueness. At the least unique level, there seem to be universal mental programs that are distributed among all people. A rather higher level of uniqueness is perceived to be the collective level, which denotes mental programming shared by people belonging to a definite group, which is similar to Harry Triandis’s (1972) theory of subjective culture.

The definition of culture was further elaborated by Clyde Kluckhohn and W.H. Kelly (1945: 97): “[b]y culture we mean all those historically created designs for living, explicit and implicit, rational, irrational, and nonrational, which exist at any given time as potential guides for the behavior of men.” One can conclude that the term culture comprises such diverse systems as religion, beliefs, etiquette and language. The question is whether the language is a rather insignificant part of the culture or whether it has special significance such that full understanding of the language involves knowledge of the culture.

Alfred Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn (1952: 181) tried to amalgamate the various definitions into a single comprehensive definition:

“Culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behavior acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiments in artifacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e. historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values; culture systems may, on the one hand, be considered as products of action, and on the other as conditioning elements of further action.”

On the other hand, John Lederach (1995: 9) states that “culture is the shared knowledge and schemes created by a set of people for perceiving, interpreting, expressing, and responding to the social realities around

them.” Culture is shared and is a part of an individual’s social interactions. The definition also highlights the adaptiveness implicit in the perception of culture as an active concept. Ralph Linton’s definition (1945: 32) of culture appears to be the most laconic: “[a] culture is a configuration of learned behaviors and results of behavior whose component elements are shared and transmitted by the members of a particular society.” The important part of the definition is the concept that behaviors are common to members of a particular culture. Linton’s viewpoint seems to be similar to Shapiro’s idea of culture which states that “members of a given society behave in uniform and predictable ways” (Shapiro 1950: 20 in Gass and Neu 1996: 320). Schein (1992: 23) recognizes three aspects of culture, namely:

- The first aspect -*artifacts*- containing noticeable daily features of life;
- The second aspect - *values and beliefs*- concentrating on judgments in terms of good and bad;
- The third aspect - *basic assumptions* -including one’s assessments of basic truths about people and the world.

Culture seems to be a universal concept: (originally, culture was associated with the concept of civilization tout-court-). Margaret Mead saw a contrast between ‘culture’ and ‘a culture’ as “[c]ulture means the whole complex of traditional behavior which has been developed by the human race and is successively learned by each generation” (Mead 1932: 17) whereas ‘a culture’ is less precise. It can mean the forms of traditional behavior which are characteristic of a given society, or of a group of societies, or of a certain race, or of a certain area, or of a certain period of time.

The number of various definitions leads one to the conclusion that there is a discrepancy in understanding the concept of culture. Robert Axelrod (1997: 2003-226) appears to converge to the concept that culture is learned. Most linguists seem to relate the term to groups of people and its content embraces a range of phenomena comprising norms, values, shared meanings, and patterned ways of behaving (Kroeber and Kluckhohn 1952; Mead and M’etraux 1953; O’Reilly 1989; Lipoński 2003; McFate 2005). In anthropological literature the usefulness of the concept of culture as a scientific instrument has been assailed, giving rise to the so-called “writing against culture movement” (Brumann 1999: S1).

Recent definitions take into consideration the shift in meaning as culture is perceived to be: “the socially transmitted knowledge and

behavior shared by some group of people” (Bailey and Peoples 1999: 23). Conversely, earlier authors identify culture as follows:

Culture comprises inherited artifacts, goods, technical processes, ideas, habits and values (Malinowski 1931: 621). Culture is a well organized unit divided into two fundamental aspects--a body of artifacts and a system of customs--but also obviously into further subdivisions or units. (Malinowski 1931: 623)

Culture ... refers ... to learned, accumulated experience. A culture ... refers to those socially transmitted patterns for behavior characteristic of a particular social group (Keesing 1981: 68).

Culture, or civilization, ... is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society (Tylor 1974: 1).

The culture of any society consists of the sum total of ideas, conditioned emotional responses, and patterns of habitual behavior which the members of that society have acquired through instruction or imitation and which they share to a greater or less degree (Linton 1936: 288).

A culture is the total socially acquired life-way or life-style of a group of people. It consists of the patterned, repetitive ways of thinking, feeling, and acting that are characteristic of the members of a particular society or segment of a society (Harris 1975: 144)

As one can notice, definitions are in agreement with the statement that culture is composed of something that is distributed and/or acquired by a group of people, but the components constituting the culture shows a discrepancy in various definitions. Similarly to as one can notice, definitions are in agreement with the statement that culture is composed of something that is distributed and/or acquired by a group of people, but the components constituting the culture shows a discrepancy in various definitions. Similarly to Axelrod (1997), one ought to perceive the culture as a set of traits<sup>1</sup> which can denote behavior, ideas, norms and so forth. Taking into account aforementioned definitions, it can be assumed that many researchers (Semin and Fiedler 1992; Versuchueren 1991; Yngve and Wąsik 2004; Wąsik 2010) face the problem of establishing clear boundaries for the fuzzy notion of culture.

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<sup>1</sup> Traits are further grouped in features in Axelrod's formulation, i.e. each feature can take value from a set of specific traits.

It is believed that the prominent aspects of culture are present in the mind (Ting-Toomey and Korzenny 1989; Eastman 1990; Bloomaert 2011). They consist of values, beliefs, and rules as well as concepts (*ibid.*). The second group (Hymes 1964; Keith 2011) believe that the boundaries of culture encompass the external world concerning the behavioral effects of these interior beliefs as well as concepts. Larry Samovar and Richard Porter's viewpoint seems to share the aforementioned attitude:

For our purposes, we define culture as the deposit of knowledge, experience, beliefs, values, attitudes, meanings, hierarchies, religion, notions of time, roles, spatial relations, concepts of the universe, and material objects and possessions acquired by a group of people in the course of generations through individual and group striving. (Samovar and Porter 1997: 12)

Fundamental to our approach is the conviction that communication is a social activity; it is something people do with and to each other. While the activity might begin in our heads, it is manifested in our behaviors – be they verbal or non-verbal. (Samovar and Porter 1997: ix)

Almost all definitions of culture state that this concept is not the property of an individual, but of a group. It ought to be taken into account that intercultural communication is never between cultures as such, but between people as well as the contexts, in which they cooperate, that is considered to be distinctive, dynamic, as well as changeable (Sterkenburg 2008).

## **Definitions of communication**

Though communication seems to be omnipresent, it appears nonetheless not easy to define. It can be noticed that the term communication is defined in different ways depending upon the interests of the researcher. Myron Lustig and Jolene Koester (1996: 29) perceive communication to be “a symbolic process in which people create shared meanings.” Moreover, communication is not always perceived to be intentional, that is why David Buller and Judee Burgoon (1996: 203) make a distinction between intended and ascribed communication. In fact messages are sent unconsciously constantly, and people around interpret as well as give symbolic meaning to these behaviors.

Communication seems to be “a dynamic transactional behavior-affecting process in which people behave intentionally in order to induce or elicit a particular response from another person” (Samovar and Porter



1991: 8) that involves shared meanings that is created as well as shared with other individuals or groups (Lustig and Koester 1996: 30). Communication appears to be interpretive by nature and people actively attempt to comprehend as well as shape their experiences in the world. Brent Ruben (1984: 11) states that communication can be recognized as any “information related behavior.” Edgar Dale (1969: 10) perceives communication to be a process of “sharing of ideas and feelings in a mood of mutuality.” Further definitions emphasize the prominence of symbols, as in Bernard Berelson and Gary Steiner (1964: 527) who state that communication is “the transmission of information, ideas, emotions and skills (...) by the use of symbols,” and George Theodorson and Achilles Theodorson (1969: 13-14) who suggest that communication is “the transmission of information, ideas, attitudes, or emotion from one person or group to another (or others) primarily through symbols.” These definitions do not include all elements of communication, and as Fred Casmir says it is “impossible to develop one single definition or methodological approach” (Casmir and Asuncion-Lande 1989: 279). A great number of explicit as well as implicit definitions of communication are available in the communication and related literature for application by scholars and practitioners trying to comprehend, explain, and predict communicative phenomena. These definitions vary depending on individual scholarly interests and wide-ranging scholarly trends. The different definitions of communication presented by Marc Hauser (1996: 7) provide a representative, albeit small, sample of ideas about communication from a broad range of disciplines. Of seven definitions offered by Hauser, three definitions of communication set communication in the context of humans or organisms, while a majority emphasize the effect of a message on its recipient (*ibid.*).

Edward Wilson suggests that “the ongoing fragmentation of knowledge and resulting chaos in philosophy are not reflections of the real world but artifacts of scholarship” (1998: 8). The above statement that all existing definitions are ‘artifacts of scholarship’; renders a model definition of communication to be an unattainable ideal. Thus, there is no indication as to which side should be successful in the long-running intra-disciplinary debates, such as whether there is intrapersonal communication, for instance.

It can be assumed that communication has the following characteristics (derived in part from questions posited by Motley 1990: 1-20):

- (1) communication is characterized by information transfer,
- (2) processing takes place in communication systems,

- (3) both the sender and the receiver are actively involved in a communication system, and
- (4) the quality of communications varies.

A definition of communication ought to be free of possibly false assumptions about sections of the communication system. It may be assumed that numbers (1) through (4) above need not be the only characteristics employed in extending a definition of communication. Thus, the model of communication ought to begin developing from observable phenomena and viable characteristics, not from conventional definitions.

There is a question of whether communication should be perceived as strictly symbolic. Michael Motley (1990: 1-20) emphasizes this symbolic nature, stating that "Cronkhite (1986) presents a very compelling case for symbolic behavior as the common denominator of all communication study." Conversely, Hauser (1996: 507) implies that the symbolic approach may not be the best in all situations, even though it is definitely a valid assumption for some models of communication. The researchers should not only focus on intentionality, motivation, or the behavior of the sender or receiver, they ought to seek a more objective, clear, and precise set of requirements for a definition of communication.

Communication may also be defined in an information-based manner employing the characteristics mentioned above, allowing one to comprehend the mechanisms underlying communication. It can be assumed that communication happens if, and only if, information transfers from the output of one process to the input of a second process, the latter process being the opposite of the first process. Communication appears to be more multifaceted than information transfer; communication procedures are composed of multiple complementary informative processes (Peters 1999). Communication has been regarded either as a complex notion deserving to be examined, or a tautology not worthy of being accounted for. The evident differentiation between explicit definitions of communication, or stated and justified position statements on communication, and implicit definitions of communication, or unstated and unjustified, yet taken-for-granted and utilized positions on communication, seems to be of great importance. Within the category of explicit communication definitions, one can separate unproblematic definitions, trying to describe or prescribe, and problematized definitions, which question or challenge. One can also distinguish between narrowing metatheoretical frameworks, aiming at reducing all communication definitions to one, and broadening metatheoretical frameworks, aiming at grouping a series of communication definitions into categories. Explicit definitions of

communication should be given emphasis to as they concentrate on exposure rather than obfuscation of assumptions in communication theory and research. Various books and articles on communication have presented and considered explicit definitions of communication, explaining its nature or prescribing its essence (DeVito 1982), or, in contrast, questioning its essentiality or naturalness (Shepherd et al. 2006), and describing its applications and prescribing its functions (Berger et al. 2010) or, on the other hand, challenging its misuses as well as malfunctions (Simpson 1994).

### **Intercultural communication**

The problems of intercultural communication have a long history. Intercultural communication studies had been connected to several disciplines and since the 1950s intercultural communication has been considered as a separate domain within cultural studies (Hart 2009). Because of cultural differences in these kinds of contacts, the probability of misinterpretation seems to be immense. To lessen this likelihood, it is fundamental to study intercultural communication.

There are various definitions of intercultural communication. According to Nicholas Dima (1990), intercultural/cross/cultural communication means “an exchange of ideas between persons belonging to two different cultures, even though they use the same language.” Thus, intercultural communication can be conceived as the management of messages for the purpose of transferring meaning across cultures. Culture, according to Gerry Philipsen (1992: 7), is described as “a socially constructed and historically transmitted pattern of symbols, meanings, apprentices, and rules.” One can assume that culture is a kind of a code. Intercultural communication can be recognized as a phenomenon which involves the exchange of symbolic information between groups with considerably different cultures (Gudykunst 2003: 261). Intercultural interaction has greater chances to build mutual misapprehension (Brislin 1993).

June Yum (1984: 96), on the other hand, notes that “intercultural communication [is] a process that involves the construction of new networks and/or the restructuring or augmentation of existing networks.” Taking into consideration this viewpoint, intercultural communication seems to be a process of creating as well as maintaining cultural boundaries, or bridging the boundaries between different cultural groups (Yum 1984: 96). Presently, linkages among a variety of cultural groups have amplified, resulting in globalization—the process of reinforcement of worldwide social relations that connects distant localities in such a way

that local events are created by circumstances at other places in the world (Giddens 1990). As a result, events occurring at one place decrease the vagueness of the future behavior of groups at another place. The amplification in trans-border communication has led to the rapid global diffusion of values, ideas and opinions that can be considered as the core components of culture. David Pinto recognizes intercultural communication to be “a (developing) discipline that studies the interaction between individuals and/or groups with different backgrounds. ICC aims to enhance intercultural awareness, encourage the use of a double-perspective approach and to offer a systematic method of analyzing cultural differences in order to increase the effectiveness of communication between these individuals and/or groups” (Pinto 2000: 15).

Additionally, the aspect of relationship between culture and language ought to be taken into account while discussing the aspect of intercultural communication. Since scholars from various disciplines have not reached agreement concerning the point to which culture and language are linked to each other, the issue of whether language can determine culture or culture can determine language ought to be resolved (cf. Sapir-Whorf 1956). The first argument seems to be that language determines our culture (ibid.). This point of view originates from the so-called ‘Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis’ which states that language not only conveys thoughts, but also forms one’s attitude, thinking as well as beliefs, and attitudes. Other scholars state that language simply reflects, rather than forms one’s thinking, beliefs as well as attitudes (Jandt 2004: 130). In spite of these discrepancies in approaches, all scholars still are of the same mind that a close relationship is present between language and culture.

The practice of communication as an act of sending as well as receiving a message is a natural process, achievable for everyone. It happens at the level of both verbal communication (VC) as well as nonverbal communication (NVC).

Combining words and phrases together into understandable sentences is verbal communication. According to Maria Dakowska (2005: 125) it seems to be intentional, as it “begins only when the sender and the addressee turn their attention to each other to open a communicative channel.” The speaker is the one who chooses the topic of the conversation, the aim, time as well as place. Dakowska (2005: 125) mentions the process of ‘verbalization.’ It can be assumed, though, that something else assists with message comprehension. It happens when the message sender selects vocabulary to be employed in their statement. The listener is not passive, their role is to “perceive (...), recognize (...), decode (...), and reconstruct the communicative intention encoded by the

sender” (ibid.). In order to make the message fully understandable, individuals do not take advantage of mere vocabulary. Involvement in the process of communication, both physical and psychological, is extremely important as said by Dakowska (2005: 126).

# CHAPTER TWO

## THEORIES OF INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

K. David Roach and Bolanle Olaniran (2001: 33) express the opinion that future research is required to “examine communication predispositions in peoples from other cultures and the influence of these factors in situations where different cultures interact.” The first linear theories, for example Shannon and Weaver (1949), did not take into account the receiver. On the other hand, Schramm (1955 in Wood 2008: 18) noticed the importance of the so called *fields of experience* of the sender as well as receiver which seems to be the most prominent one as they underlined the importance of harmony in the sender’s and receiver’s field of experience by stating that lack of harmony leads to the situation when communication does not occur.

This chapter aims to examine the differences in the particular theories of intercultural communication in the hope of drawing some helpful conclusions significant for further parts of the dissertation.

### **Context Theory**

Edward T. Hall's idea of high and low context messages considers communication in relation to the relative significance of the context of the message. A low context message has unambiguous information in the message, with little or no ‘unspoken’ or implied information. In a high context message much of the meaning seems to be implicit, figured out from the situation, relationships, and non-verbal messages (Hall 1976). A high context culture is recognized as a culture where communication relies on subtleties and situation. Low context cultures appear to be those where everything or nearly everything is communicated by explicit information (Jandt 2004: 27). This theory appears to move some way toward reducing the possibility of creating offense in intercultural communication.

Hall himself notes that “there is little in language or culture that can be pinned down the way many would like” (Hall 1976: 115). Hall’s theory

(1976) offers the lens through which intercultural communication can be examined. This theory gives a concrete description for communication complexities and collaborative behaviors that are grounded on cultural values. Hall (1976) establishes a cultural dimension called context, a continuous spectrum, which demonstrates the degree to which a person recognizes non-verbal cues in a communicative situation. High context culture highlights settings or the environment (i.e. context), while low context culture concentrates on words or content (Hall 1976). Hall understood that everyday communication could lead to information overload, which he describes as “a situation in which the system breaks down when it cannot properly handle the huge volume of information to which it is subjected” (1976: 85). Context appears to play a significant role in minimizing information overload allowing an individual to choose what to concentrate on and what to disregard. The process of contextualization entails two completely diverse but interrelated processes (Hall 1976). It requires the inside of a person (a person’s mind experience, and structure of the nervous system) or the external situation, such as the situation or environment in which an event happens or a person is in. Contextualization is thus a process and a strategy by which an individual assesses the amount and level of information to gain from or offer to another person when involved in the process of communication (ibid.).

Comprehending the process of contextualization also helps in overcoming as well as reducing cultural differences. Communication problems frequently occur when individuals describe, interpret, comprehend and communicate information in a different way. This problem appears to be aggravated between people with different cultural values: what is considered valuable, significant, and worth communicating among individuals in one culture may not be regarded as such by people from another culture (ibid.). It ought to be noted that Hall’s theory offers one explanatory perspective for considering communicative behaviors in globally distributed collaboration, namely a cultural perspective.

### **Communicating with strangers**

William Gudykunst and Young Yun Kim seem to present a pragmatic viewpoint as far as the concept of intercultural communication by stating that: “[they] believe that in order to understand the process of intercultural communication and to improve our intercultural effectiveness, we must have the conceptual tools to understand what is happening” (Gudykunst and Kim 1997: xii). Gudykunst and Kim concentrate attention on the concept of the ‘stranger’ which is considered as “people who are members

of different groups and unknown to us” (Gudykunst and Kim 1997: 25). As a result, it can be assumed that ‘all’ communication can be perceived to be intercultural. The discrepancy between interaction with a person who shares one’s ethnicity as well as language, and one’s interaction with a member of a foreign country who shares neither, appears not to be a ‘qualitative’ divergence but a matter of the level of strangeness. This can be perceived to be an important theoretical admission.

By reducing the weight of the aspect of ethnicity, Gudykunst and Kim (ibid.) lay the way for comprehending of culture functioning at each level of a ‘group.’ They propose that various types of culture-related influences on the process of communication can be recognized (Gudykunst and Kim 1997: 46). Cultural influences comprise norms and rules that are viewed as “sets of expected behaviors for particular situations.” (Gudykunst and Kim 1997:47). Psycho-cultural influences are those rooted not in one’s culture or society, but in one’s own personal as well as psychological experience (ibid.). Yet, environmental influences connect one’s expectations of behavior and a specified physical environment.

Throughout, Gudykunst and Kim seem to caution that while one tendency “say, individualism may hold at a cultural level, any individual within that culture is free to prefer collectivism” (Gudykunst and Kim 1997: 57). Admitting the individual opens the way to discrepancy, to non-cultural, situational influences; briefly, it recognizes the real world.

## **Attribution Theory**

Fritz Heider (1982) appears to be considered to be the first to suggest a psychological theory of attribution. Attribution theory concentrates on the information individuals make use of in making inferences, and the causes of observed behavior (Wayer and Carlston 1979: 4).

Attribution theory takes it for granted that people aim to establish why others perform actions in a certain way (ibid.). A person seeking to comprehend why another person performed something may attribute one or more causes to that behavior (ibid.). An attribution is described as a three-stage process (Weiner 1986: 25), namely:

- (1) the person must identify or monitor the behavior,
- (2) then the person must believe that the behavior was purposely performed,
- (3) then the person must decide if they believe the other person was forced to perform the behavior (in which case the cause is attributed to the situation) or not (in which case the cause is



attributed to the person).

Heider distinguishes between internal and external attributions, stating that the idea that personal forces as well as environmental factors can influence the individual, namely consistency, distinctiveness and consensus (ibid.). The attribution theory concentrates on individuals being reasonable and so far “one of the most common research findings is that people are often illogical and biased in their attributions” (Littlejohn 1999: 133). An additional intricacy with the attribution theory seems to be that “one of the persistent findings in attribution research is the fundamental attribution error. This is the tendency to attribute the cause of events to personal qualities” (ibid.). Attribution theory has some value as an attempt to clarify why members of definite cultures act the way they do, yet it offers little in the way of the predictability of cultural behavior.

## **Face Negotiation Theory**

Stella Ting-Toomey's face theory (1994) concentrates on the way various cultures deal with the strategies to save or respect face. She identifies face to be symbolic as well as indicate “a claimed sense of self-respect in a relational situation.” (Ting-Toomey 1994: 327). Face-negotiation theory tries to give explanation of the influence of cultural differences in answer to the notion of conflict (ibid.). The basic premise of this theory is that people from different kinds of cultures tend to manage ‘facework’ differently and therefore prefer different types of conflict management (ibid.). The idea of face is also employed to give explanation of the concept of politeness (ibid.).

Ting-Toomey's theory is based on the hypothesis that interpersonal communication can be perceived to be an intentional process. Face theory also identifies cultures as mainly national in nature, which do not take into account significant interethnic and other sub-cultural questions taking place within national boundaries (Ting-Toomey 1994).

Ting-Toomey emphasizes the fact that during negotiation, there are two simultaneous face processes taking place (Ting-Toomey, Otzel et al. 2001). Although much more consideration has been devoted to the aspect of face-threatening behaviors, face-honoring processes also seem to be visible (ibid.). Ting-Toomey states that people ought to gain knowledge of face-maintenance as it is the significant feature aiming at obtaining successful inter-group negotiation (ibid.). By face-maintenance, she understands “the desire to project an image of strength and capability, or conversely, to avoid projecting an image of incapability, weakness, or

foolishness.” (Ting-Toomey, Korzeny and Ryan 1990:80). The classical models of Leech, R. Lakoff, Brown and Levinson have been discussed in great detail both in a positive way and critically, so they will not be described here, the more so that the term facework is more suitable for describing the behavior of interactants in both intra- and intercommunication processes.

Ting-Toomey emphasizes that in negotiation, one should aim at taking into consideration the veracities of mutual face-concern, or the face-honoring processes, which frequently happen simultaneously with face-threatening maneuvers (ibid). As a result, low-context cultures indicate a tendency to use more often face-threatening exchanges, while high-context cultures seem to concentrate more on face-honoring exchanges (Ting-Toomey 1994: 320). Ting-Toomey declares that other “cultural variability factors, interaction event constraint factors, personality factors, and the perceived and actual communication exchanges between the inter-group negotiators all work simultaneously to influence the face-negotiation process” (Ting-Toomey 1994: 83). When one considers the concept of face in an international setting, there are three types of face that can be distinguished, namely the *personal* level, the *national* level and at last the national face corresponding to *international* politics (ibid.).

Notwithstanding cultural differences, face-threatening shifts seem to be considered essential, the chances for a victorious negotiation amplify when a good balance of face-honoring moves can be obtained, and to appease the outcomes of threats to face. Ting-Toomey’s viewpoint seems to concentrate on the fact that the model she presents will lead to more fruitful results in intergroup exchanges.

### **A discourse approach**

Similar to Gudykunst and Kim, Suzanne Wong Scollon and Ron Scollon aim at creating and applying a theoretical framework for intercultural communication. Yet, their objectives appear to be less general. The emphasis is given to “*professional communication* between people who are members of different groups” (Scollon and Wong Scollon 1995: xi). The Scollons seem to be aware of the problems caused by the complexity as well as multiplexity of cultural membership which appear to be the basis for the following conclusion:

“... not all cultural differences are equally problematical in intercultural communication. In fact, some cultural differences do not make any major difference from the point of view of discourse analysis. The reason for this is that cultures tend to be very large groupings with many sub-groupings.

There is hardly any dimension on which you could compare cultures and with which one culture could be clearly and unambiguously distinguished from another" (Scollon and Wong Scollon 1995: 161)

Taking into account this reason, the authors concentrate on *discourse systems*. A discourse system comprises four elements, namely a set of ideological norms, distinctive socialization processes, a standard set of discourse forms as well as "a set of assumptions about face relationships within the discourse system" (Scollon and Wong Scollon 2001: 177). Every individual appears to be a member of a great number of discourse systems, connecting all of the sets of which one is part (Scollon and Wong Scollon 2001: 116). Many systems appear to divide along with the culture. There are various discourse systems which are created on the objective basis, for example, academic, gender etc. Scollon and Wong Scollon (2001: 4) perceived intercultural communication to be 'interdiscourse' communication. As a result, they concentrate on describing a variety of important discourse systems, paying attention to those most frequently employed in professional communication.

This theory seems to have several advantages over the theories presented before e.g. by Gudykunst and Kim. First of all, the objectives they establish appear to be narrower in their scope. Yet, there exist many discourse systems sharing the features that prevail in professional communication. Secondly, discourse systems appear to bear similarities to, as well as contrasting from, the varied dimensions of cultural description raised by Gudykunst and Kim.

Thirdly, discourse analysis seems to be evidently rooted in the authentic interactions of people. Description appears to be precisely determined by the discourse systems employed by individuals in definite contexts. Notwithstanding these enhancements, interdiscourse analysis is still encountering the complexity of humans' relations.

## **Common ground**

Common ground seems to be frequently mentioned in dialogical models of communication (Clark and Brennan 1991; Wardhaugh 1985). To create 'common ground' in dialogue indicates setting the context for one's conveyed message (Clark and Brennan 1991).

According to Ronald Wardhaugh (1985), it is scarcely ever compulsory for speakers to treat each as well as every conversation as if the speakers are starting from the beginning with no shared knowledge at all. It is frequently supposed by speakers that a certain amount of ground is shared. The scope of this shared knowledge, as Wardhaugh (1985) points

out, is affected by the conditions of the speakers.

On the other hand, even when one actually shares specialised knowledge with others, one does have to be careful while mentioning things outside of the shared specialised areas of information. Wardhaugh (1985) states that one cannot depend on others who state that they possess knowledge about certain things. Because of this reason, to create what is shared knowledge as well as what is not, most conversations entail a degree of duplication and checking that one has been comprehended.

## Critical theory

Jürgen Habermas (1971: 308-310) recognizes three main generic cognitive areas in which human interest creates knowledge. These areas are categories relevant to what is interpreted as knowledge and they are termed '*knowledge constitutive*' (ibid.). The practical strand recognizes human social interaction as being ruled by norms, which identify reciprocal expectations with reference to behavior between individuals (ibid.). Social norms can be associated with practical or methodical propositions, but their validity is rooted "only in the intersubjectivity of the mutual understanding of intentions" (Habermas 191: 92). The reason for clarification of conditions for communication and intersubjectivity (the comprehension of meaning rather than causality) is employed to verify an appropriate action (ibid.). The emancipatory domain identifies 'self-knowledge' or self-reflection (ibid.). This entails interest in the way one's history or biography has expressed itself in the way one perceives oneself, one's roles and social expectations.

This point of view appears to be taken up by Stanley Deetz (in Griffin 1997: 492) who maintains that

the naive notion that communication is merely the transmission of information perpetuates managerialism, discursive closure, and the corporate colonization of every day life. Language is the principal medium through which social reality is produced and reproduced. Managers can further a company's health and democratic values by coordinating stakeholder participation in corporate decisions.

Deetz appears to adopt a humanistic view of the world. For he maintains that communication is an ongoing process, and rather than reflecting reality, originates from reality. The individual meanings one can come up with are shared. Rather than employing the information model, Deetz applies a communication model in which entity's level of involvement with a group is critical. Taking this into consideration, Deetz distinguishes

three metatheoretical assumptions, namely ontological, epistemological and axiological (ibid). The ontological assumption appears to be a very humanistic viewpoint. On the other hand, the epistemological assumption underlines the notion stating there is a multiple reality built when more than one human being brings their ideas to the group. This phenomenological perspective derives from a belief that one equally shapes his/her reality. Deetz underlines the importance of one's involvement and participation that appear to help to shape one's world. Axiological assumption is perceived to be very value subjective, since it aims at considering the thoughts and influences from individual members of the group and not just the top-down approach. This humanistic viewpoint of the roles that people play demonstrates that everyone indicates the ability to be influential.

### **Meaning of meaning theory**

Richards's theory appears to be a new rhetoric that aims at studying misunderstanding and its remedies (Griffin 1997: 57). This new rhetoric concentrates on comprehension rather than persuasion, which is what most of the old rhetoric took into consideration. Instead of concentrating on the information that is conveyed in a conversation, Richards (1936) states that understanding is the major aim of communication and communication problems result from misunderstanding. Yet, Richards recognized that information that was lost during a conversation was because of the equivocal nature of language.

One of the ideas behind the meaning of meaning theory is "The Proper Meaning Superstition." This is the false belief that every word has an exact meaning (ibid). Richards (ibid.) acknowledges that the Proper Meaning Superstition is false because words often denote different things to different people in different situations. As a result, it leads to the situation where misunderstanding arises as it causes problems when two different people think that they are recalling the same thing, but in fact they are not.

Another notion that Richards (1923) describes is the idea of signs and symbols in communication. A sign is perceived as something that one directly encounters, but at the same time it may denote something else (Griffin 1997: 58). Consistent with this statement, words can be recognized as a different kind of sign called a symbol. Symbols have no natural relation to the things that they depict (Griffin 1997: 58). There is nothing special about the word that says it must be connected to what it stands for. The only reason that words are symbols of something is

because they have been given meaning. This can cause problems when people are communicating using arbitrary words that do not have an exact meaning. It can be assumed that it is vital to take into consideration the context to get a better understanding of the meaning.

Richard and Ogden (in Griffin 1997: 59) state that misunderstanding can be avoided while applying the feedforwarding. Feedforward takes place when the speaker considers how his/her audience will respond to what he/she is about to say and adjusts his/her words accordingly (ibid.). Feedforward obliges the speaker to think about the experiences that the person that they are talking to has had to facilitate a better explanation of what they are saying.

Another problem with this theory is that simply understanding meaning does not give complete understanding of the word unless it is in context. Despite these criticisms, this theory makes a lot of sense. Everyone can apply it in their everyday life. There is probably nobody in the world who has not had a problem with word confusion in some conversation they have had. This theory is also important because it shows us an excellent technique for learning other languages.

The Meaning of Meaning Theory has both scientific and humanistic perspectives. As far as being a scientific theory this theory is relatively simple. Richards puts the theory into words and concepts that are easy to understand. It also has a testable hypothesis. We can test this theory and see it working everyday in our lives. This theory could be applied to many conversations that one has had. It also has practical application in the sense that it shows us ways to clear up misunderstandings that communication confusion may have created. This theory does not just present us with a problem and leave it for the reader to figure out; it gives solutions for ways to fix the problem.

The theory offers an attempt to understand people and acknowledges that individuals have different past experiences and personal backgrounds. These factors affect how people think, and it draws one's attention to the fact that this aspect should be taken into account. The theory reminds one that meanings are not embedded in words but in the people who exploit them.