The Notion of Culture in Linguistic Research

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Abstract: Many works on intercultural communication from the field of linguistics share the assumption that influences of culture on social interaction will manifest in communicative exchanges—and conversely, that an academic's look at these exchanges will be a sufficient basis for an adequate description of what intercultural communication is supposed to be about. Linguistic theory itself lacking of places to integrate culture as a factor into its concepts, urges scholars to borrow operationalizations of culture from neighboring disciplines like e.g. different strands of psychology, sociology or anthropology. Approaches resulting from this transdisciplinary orientation as a consequence share very divergent assumptions on how, at what moment in a communicative process and with what effects culture influences social interaction. While many surveys on similar behalf distinguish between primordial and constructionist approaches, a closer look at different strands of empirical linguistic research may reveal even more precise and detailed distinctions on how culture may be captured and framed. This article will present and analyze a selection of approaches from the mentioned field, e.g. from intercultural and contrastive pragmatics, interactional sociolinguistics, ethnography of communication, ethnomethodology as well as discourse analysis. In each case, the underlying notions of culture will be revealed and put into contrast. Additionally, this exemplary analysis may show that most of the empirical schools mentioned follow and adopt changing notions of culture from social theory over time.

Table of Contents

1. Introduction

Swiss linguist Ferdinand DE SAUSSURE (2001/1916) has revolutionized linguistic thought when he introduced structuralist ideas on how mutual understanding by means of language is supposed to work. Later, even philosophers showed considerable interest in his thoughts and they paved the way for cultural philosophy and the integration of culture into social theory (CASSIRER, 1992/1947). Linguists doing research on intercultural communication on that basis, on the one hand, found a first solid basis to integrate culture into linguistic theory. On the other hand, after the era of structuralism, the assumed constraints of this paradigm tended to persist in linguistics and for a long time they impeded linguists from taking note of the advances of cultural theory after structuralism. [1]

Meanwhile, the notion of culture has turned into a popular way to link macro-social phenomena to micro-social observation in the social sciences. Besides of that, authors from cross-cultural and intercultural research continue to point at today's enormous increase of cross-cultural exchange and interaction (BLACK & MENDENHALL, 1990). Linguists from different schools (GUMPERZ, 1982a, p.3; BLUM-KULKA, HOUSE & KASPER, 1989, p.1; KOOLE & TEN THIJE, 1994, p.3) continue to claim a priority role for linguistic approaches in cross-cultural and intercultural communication research. In these respects, they point at the fact that intercultural interaction will always and necessarily be carried out by means of (verbal) communication and that consequently, empirical methods from linguistics will tend to provide the most valuable insights. [2]

Since culture had never had its own place in classical linguistic theory, linguists got used to borrow notions and definitions on what culture was supposed to be from other academic disciplines. As a consequence, linguists today have a wide choice of concepts of culture at their disposal. This variety may on the one hand enrich the potential of linguistic research. On the other hand it should be kept in mind that, although many authors would reject this for their research, one of the main motivations for doing research on intercultural communication might still be seen in the mission to find ways to improve people's intercultural competence. From this point of view, culture is seen as a variable that will on the one hand influence the outcome of people's interaction, but that on the other hand may be actively used by interactants to improve their outcomes in terms of mutual understanding and/or agreement. [3]

From this perspective, the multitude of optionally available notions of culture may lead to significantly diverging judgments of people's intercultural competence vs. their potential scope of action. However, besides the field of research on intercultural education (AUERNHEIMER, 1999; MECHERIL, 2002), this insight seems to run the risk of being neglected in current research and discourse on intercultural communication. Putting recommendations from research into practice, the fact that what individuals are advised to do is largely pre-determined by theoretical considerations instead of practical experiences sometimes tends to get out of sight. [4]

Encouraging a better awareness of this phenomenon, a critical classification of current approaches to intercultural communication should first and foremost uncover the exact ways in which these approaches conceive culture to influence social interaction. However, a first short look at the relevant literature may reveal that just this central question so far has largely been neglected or even avoided. Recently, SCHONDELMAYER (2008) summarized this dilemma for the field of cultural anthropology: According to her, current studies in cultural anthropology may roughly be divided into pursuing two different traditions with opposing perspectives on their objects of research: Works of those scholars explicitly committing themselves to research on intercultural communication ("interculturalists," HANNERZ, 1997, p.541) still tend to build upon ideas from cognitive anthropology initiated by Ward GOODENOUGH (1957) and today centrally purported by Roy G. D'ANDRADE (1995). According to them, culture is seen as a system of mental knowledge shared by a cultural community. Researchers can describe this knowledge, and people entering a new culture will need to learn this knowledge to cope with their new environment. Empirical research on this behalf has consequently focused on the description of people's attitudes and interpretations, but they rather neglected to look at people's action resulting from these attitudes. [5]

SCHONDELMAYER opposes this strand to what she summarizes as interpretive anthropology and what founds the basis of most of the works in contemporary cultural anthropology: Scholars from interpretive anthropology, e.g. GEERTZ (1973), assume that individuals actively produce meaning to interpret their surroundings and that, by doing this, they create culture. In opposition to the tradition of cognitive anthropology, interpretive anthropology focuses on individuals' practices and instead neglects considering potential underlying beliefs or values (SCHONDELMAYER, 2008, p.36). SCHONDELMAYER does not propose a new theory to bridge this gap neither, but she produces new insights (e.g. "paradoxe Parallelität" [*paradox parallelism*; D.B.], p.265) into the relationship between people's attitudes and their practices in intercultural settings by opposing and comparing them with each other (p.14). [6]

The paper at hand will try to at least evaluate a number of selected and exemplary approaches to the description of intercultural communication according to their contribution to bridge the gap between the description of people's attitudes and knowledge vs. their practices. To do so, it will be asked what culture is supposed to consist of, and whether it is taken as a given prior to a situation or whether it is produced in time by interactants. It will then be asked for the degree to which individuals are conceded their own freedom of situational action vs. the degree to which they are bound to their cultures. [7]

Reviewing the literature on intercultural communication on this behalf may reveal the rather disappointing impression that most of this research rather seems to be designed to integrate culture as a factor into formerly universalist theories and—by doing so—to confirm these existing theories than to design new theories tailored to describe the role of culture (cf. "additive procedure," KOOLE & TEN THIJE, 1994, p.72). In these respects, KIM (2007) illustrates for speech

communication research, that academic interest in the role of culture and motivation for research have undergone a long-term shift that itself shows some parallels to cross-cultural encounters: Accordingly, early scholars took the standpoint of a "'preencounter' research culture: 'I'm not interested'" (KIM, 2007, p.280). This today may also be termed a universalist perspective assuming that scientific results on any research question will produce the same results in all cultures. KIM then identifies an " 'initial encounter' research culture" of scholars assuming that "culture is a nuisance" that has to be dealt with as a cumbersome hindrance from insights (KIM, 2007, p.281). According to KIM, most of the current research may be classified as carried out from the " 'Captain Cook' research culture" of scholars proposing a "Let's explore and compare" mindset (KIM, 2007, p.282). To effectively gain cross-cultural insights, KIM however pleads for a "'paradigm shift' research culture: 'beyond ethnocentric paradigms'" (KIM, 2007, p.282). Although KIM does not substantiate this idea any further, the subsequent literature review may prove this appraisal truer than it may seem at first sight. [8]

2. A Systematics on Culture's Influences on Social Interaction

To delineate theory-based interrelations between culture and social interaction, KLUCKHOHN and STRODTBECK's (1961, p.3) assumption that culture serves as an explanatory linkage between phenomena at a social macro-level and the micro-level of individuals' action may serve as a telling starting-point. To specify this notion, a closer look should be taken at the precise point within interaction at which culture is supposed to interfere. This paper will argue that the distinction between primordialist vs. constructionist notions of culture taken from APPADURAI's (1996) work may be a useful approach to this aim. Prior to this, some alternative approaches to the categorization of studies in intercultural research will be reviewed. [9]

The distinction between contrastive and interactionist views on intercultural and cross-cultural communication initially had been put forward by GUMPERZ (1982b). Relating to ideas prepared by MEAD (MEAD & MORRIS, 1934) and GOFFMAN (1967), GUMPERZ claimed that separate descriptions of two cultures and their mere comparison cannot be taken as a basis to predict what will happen when people from these two cultures meet. In whatever way culture is conceived to influence interaction, GUMPERZ states that intercultural interaction cannot be explained neither on the mere basis of the assumed underlying original cultures nor on the assumption that culture will predetermine intercultural contact. Instead, participants themselves will negotiate the progression of their interaction. In most cases however, interactionist approaches as well assume that interaction will take place on the basis of given cultural conventions—which interactants may decide to apply or not. Still, from this perspective, the interactionist approach may be seen as a major advancement and a complement to earlier approaches from culture-contrastive research, which had been confined to mere comparisons of cultures. [10]

Another classification of approaches may be seen in the distinction between etic and emic research methods (BERRY, 1969). In etic approaches, researchers

look at cultures from an external point of view. They formulate universal categories and dimensions helping to classify and to compare different cultures. In contrast, authors of emic studies try to take in the perspective of their objects of research. While both approaches may contribute significant insights into intercultural communication, the distinction mentioned does neither fix nor specify the way culture is supposed to influence interaction. [11]

2.1 Culture as a given vs. culture as a product

A more suitable approach on this behalf may be found in APPADURAI's (1996, p.14) distinction between primordialist and constructionist concepts of culture. Within their research, authors following a primordialist approach take culture and the quality of its influences on individuals as givens that they will not be able to modify. APPADURAI instead pleads for an instrumentalist view on culture. From this standpoint, cultural differences are not given but people construct them for their own (instrumentalist) purposes (APPADURAI, 1996, p.14). However, a short look at mainstream cross-cultural research and cultural politics may reveal that the notion of constructionist approaches still tends to be ignored as criticized by SPIVAK (1987), TAYLOR (1994) as well as KALSCHEUER and ALLOLIO-NÄCKE (2002). Besides from research and politics, intercultural education and training are hit by the most striking critique in these respects: Anthropologists like DAHLÉN (1997) revealed that much of cross-cultural management training offered in the U.S. is still confined to a basis of very much generalized and primordialist concepts of culture. Instead of allowing people to understand and to apply current approaches of cultural theory, DAHLÉN reveals what HANNERZ had termed a "culture shock prevention industry" (HANNERZ, 1992, p.251) serving the economic market. [12]

2.2 Culture as knowledge vs. culture as values and beliefs

Another crucial distinction influencing the conception of cultural influences may be seen in the equation of either culture as knowledge or culture as values or beliefs. In the first case, approaches see culture as a form of specific knowledge either on particular interaction contexts or on particular communicative rules or conventions. Members of a given cultural group are said to share this knowledge as their characteristic feature. Some approaches further specify this culture-specific knowledge as needed to deal with problems of social life that are universally given in all cultures. To enter a new group or to get acquainted with a group's culture, outsiders will need to learn and internalize this knowledge. [13]

Theories conceiving culture as beliefs or values underlying people's interaction instead see culture as a preferential system. According to this approach, members of a specific culture will prefer certain forms of action at the expense of other forms. Consequently, it may be assumed that on the one hand individuals of one culture indeed will prefer some forms of action, but that on the other hand they will always be able to act in alternative ways (AUERNHEIMER, 2002). Considering this last point, both conceptions significantly shape individuals' assumed scope of action. [14]

Beyond this distinction, some anthropologists like SWIDLER (1986, 2001) hint at the shortcomings resulting from a separation of these two approaches to understand cultural influences on action. SWIDLER instead proposes to combine both approaches arguing that culture may be conceived as a repertoire of knowledge people may but do not necessarily have to make use of. On the basis of this deliberate choice individuals then will decide about how to interact—and theory may then take this interaction as influenced by culture. In this paper however, works using this approach will be put into the category of constructionist approaches. [15]

2.3 The primordialist approach: cultures as a given, people react to

Primordialist approaches to the description of culture in the first instance take culture and its influences as givens, and in cross-cultural interaction, people are said to react to these influences. Beyond this, primordialist approaches may vary significantly in the ways they identify and distinguish culturally loaded units (for an overview and a discussion see CHICK, 2001). Accordingly, primordialist approaches for example do not necessarily claim that culture and ethnicity are almost given by nature. Instead, they may well agree that cultural differences may result from social processes. However, the emergence of cultural differences is taken as having taken place beforehand and it is no longer focused in the respective analyses. [16]

Compared to constructionist notions of culture, primordial views are much deeper rooted in early social science research dating back as early as to HERDER (1974/1784-1791) and HUMBOLDT (1903, p.16). Despite this long tradition, especially psychologists had always been facing major difficulties trying to integrate culture as an a priori given into their theories that centered around humans as pure individuals (BRABANT, WATSON, & GALLOIS, 2007, p.56). Basing on this assumption, culture could not be considered as something people are able to control and change, but instead as something they will have to learn (as knowledge) and to take into consideration to develop an (individually based) intercultural competence in the end (BRABANT et al., 2007, p.55). Later, psychologists significantly restricted this view considering that misunderstandings resulting from a clash of culturally different forms of action may lead into perceived uncertainty and conflict. Although individuals may have the required cultural knowledge they may not feel like making use of it when feeling threatened or in a conflict. MATSUMOTO et al. thus concluded that instead, people's ability to keep control over their emotions may come out to be a much more decisive aspect of intercultural competence ("Emotion Regulation" (ER), MATSUMOTO, YOO & LeROUX, 2007, p.82). [17]

2.3.1 Cultures as knowledge

2.3.1.1 Culture as congruent with language

Although linguistics' turn towards pragmatics in the 1950's and 1960's encouraged the discipline to overcome the constraints of structuralist thought, many authors continued to claim universal validity of their approaches without considering potential cultural variation (GRICE, 1975; LEECH, 1983a; BROWN & LEVINSON, 1987). Later approaches tried to integrate cultural variation into these concepts (BLUM-KULKA et al. 1989b; CLYNE, 1994), but current authors still point at major shortcomings of these efforts (GODDARD, 2006, p.1).[1] [18]

Linguists easily argued that intercultural communication research was what they had always been doing: For a long time, scholars simply equated culture with language assuming that language is one—and the most visible and distinguishable—aspect of culture. The tradition of contrastive linguistics comparing selected linguistic aspects and their realization in different languages (FISIAK, 1980, 1984; OLEKSY, 1989; JASZCZOLT, 1995) could thus be taken as predetermined as a method for the comparison of cultures. Situations of intercultural contact from this perspective could primarily be seen as characterized by the fact that people of at least two different native languages meet. To start an interaction, at least one of them will then need to speak a foreign language, and some authors equate this multilingualism with multiculturalism: People speaking more than one language will also need to have some knowledge on more than one culture (LÜDI, 2006, p.13). [19]

2.3.1.2 Cultural knowledge underlying verbal communication

Many authors going into some more detail still felt that culture may influence verbal interaction at so many different levels that linguists in their analyses will soon face their limits resulting from their object's complexity: They could either simply list a number of potential levels and their respective cultural influences (SCOLLON & SCOLLON, 1981) or they had to formulate theories remaining at a very general level of description. In the latter case, authors assumed that probably most communicative conventions, especially at the level of pragmatics, will potentially differ across cultures. HOUSE for examples terms this phenomenon a "cultural filter" (J. HOUSE, 1997) that especially translators will hardly be able to completely overcome. [20]

Within the field of German language studies, EHLICH and REHBEIN presented their concept of speech action patterns (EHLICH & REHBEIN, 1986; EHLICH, 1987, 1996). According to them, linguistic phenomena or utterances cannot be tied to any cultural interference on social interaction. Instead, recurring combinations of certain linguistic forms can be seen as speech actions serving certain aims or goals. These speech actions draw on underlying patterns on an extra-lingual deep level, at which social structure and culture come into play.

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1   See also the article of BARINAGA (2009) in this thematic issue.

Advancing BÜHLER's theory of field characteristics of language (BÜHLER, 1982/1934; EHLICH, 1996, p.196ff.), EHLICH and REHBEIN describe how singular verbal utterances (procedures) may be tied to this deep level. According to the theory of speech action patterns, individuals thus need some implicit knowledge on cultural structures that helps them to perform any basic communicative interaction. Applications of this theory on issues of intercultural communication may be found in REHBEIN (1985), HARTOG (2006) as well as ROST-ROTH (2006) as an example. [21]

To highlight the distinction between cultural vs. social knowledge, REDDER and REHBEIN epitomize the particular role of culture within REHBEIN's theory as a "cultural apparatus" (REDDER & REHBEIN, 1987). Instead of assuming culture as effecting like a permanent filter, REDDER and REHBEIN argue that individuals can decide whether they want to consider cultural aspects or not. However all-integrating these approaches may be on the one hand, on the other hand they do not introduce culture as some new kind of factor on communication that had not been considered elsewhere before. Instead, these approaches rather tend to confirm the validity of existing universal approaches like speech act theory, contextualization or critical theory. [22]

2.3.2 Cultures as values

A much wider choice of works on intercultural communication conceives cultures as values instead of fixed and learnable knowledge. Geert HOFSTEDE (1980, 2002) putting the world's national cultures into a framework of four linear dimensions may be seen as one of the most prominent and most frequently cited authors conceiving the relevance of culture to intercultural communication in terms of values underlying people's action. HOFSTEDE bases his approach on PARSONS' (1951) structural functionalism and people's value orientations implied by this concept (HOFSTEDE, 1983, p.291). In this tradition, several authors (C. KLUCKHOHN, 1962/1952; DOUGLAS, 1970) had proposed different sets of potential value orientations that could be put into correlation when placed on linear scales (HOFSTEDE, 1983, p.291). According to HOFSTEDE, adequate research on this behalf necessarily will have to produce very large numbers of value orientations producing a too complex picture to derive characteristics of national cultures (for an example see MURDOCK's Human Relations Area Files, MURDOCK, 1949). HOFSTEDE thus confines his survey to the investigation of "work related values" (HOFSTEDE, 1980). Here, one critical aspect of this focus may be seen in the fact that HOFSTEDE deliberately selects and names criteria and aspects that should be taken as socially relevant and as accountable for a nation's culture. [23]

In general, HOFSTEDE sees culture in terms of work-related values as something people are not consciously aware of. Empiricists will thus not be able to directly interview individuals and ask them to overtly express their values. Instead, for the case of work-related values, HOFSTEDE surveys people's satisfaction with different leadership styles in their companies. Satisfaction and preferences of certain styles may them hint at the presence of underlying values

(HOFSTEDE & SADLER, 1976, p.90). MOOSMÜLLER (2004, p.60) notes that in these respects, HOFSTEDE's approach is similar to the notion of habitus in the works of BOURDIEU (1979) and later ELIAS (1989) assuming that implicit underlying values prompt individuals to express certain preferences. [24]

Although the mere existence of preferences and values does not cater for people acting accordingly, HOFSTEDE claims that "there is little doubt that organizational culture affects performance" (HOFSTEDE, 1998, p.491). Even 1990's more elaborate and updated GLOBE study (R.J. HOUSE, HANGES, JAVIDAN, DORFMAN & GUPTA, 2004) builds upon the same assumptions on what culture is supposed to be, how it may be identified, and how culture affects people's interaction. [25]

2.3.2.1 The culture-specific way to put universal values into words

Those linguistic approaches to intercultural communication assuming that underlying values and shared preferences are the crucial factors enabling people to communicate and to understand each other may be put into three groups: Some of them assume that values underlying communication are by and large universal but that cultures differ in the ways people put these values into words. In contrast, other approaches claim that underlying values are completely culture-relative and that they account for the core of cultural differences. In that case, cultures are not considered to differ in the way they put these values into words. A third group of studies claims that both levels are culture-specific: Cultures differ in their values underlying interaction, and they differ in their ways to put values into words. The following lines will present some examples for each case. [26]

The first group of approaches mentioned assumes that culture influences interaction by determining the way universal values are put into words. One prominent example for this approach comes from one of intercultural pragmatics' most extensive undertakings, the so-called *Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project* (BLUM-KULKA et al., 1989). According to the authors of this project, principles of interpersonal politeness may be taken as culturally universal. One of these universals on politeness may be seen in the idea that it is mostly expressed by different modes of communicative indirectness. Beyond this however, different languages provide very different conventions on how to verbally express speakers' intention of being indirect. [27]

2.3.2.2 The universal way to put culture-specific values into words

CONDON and YOUSEF (1975) may belong to the first authors who tried to introduce culture as a parameter into linguistic theory stating that culture-specific values will influence the way people communicate (MOOSMÜLLER, 2007, p.17). In a similar vein, THOMAS (1983) concedes that there may be culturally different ways of speaking leading to misunderstandings termed *pragmalinguistic failure* (J. THOMAS, 1983, p.101) in intercultural contact. People may overcome these differences by just learning these linguistic particularities. Beyond this however, THOMAS states that in addition, culture influences interaction in terms of

underlying culture-specific *value judgments* (J. THOMAS, 1983, p.106) that may lead to *sociopragmatic failure* (J. THOMAS, 1983, p.103) and that are much more difficult to manage in intercultural contact. [28]

SPENCER-OATEY and JIANG (2003) curtail this assumed variety of culture-specific values. Introducing culture as a factor into LEECH's (1983b) universal pragmatic theory of linguistic politeness, SPENCER-OATEY and JIANG agree with LEECH that polite communicative behavior results from people trying to conform to a universal set of values. However, instead of assuming that people from all cultures strive to conform to these values in the same way, SPENCER-OATEY and JIANG claim that cultures differ in the way they attribute importance to these values in specific situations. For each universal value and for each specific situation, cultures may thus be ranged on a one-dimensional scale according to the importance of a given value to be followed. SPENCER-OATEY and JIANG term this way culture influences interaction as *sociopragmatic interaction principles (SIP)* (SPENCER-OATEY & JIANG, 2003, p.1633). According to the authors, this cultural impact on interaction may be uncovered by facing people with given standard situations and by asking them to rate the importance of certain given values. [29]

CLYNE (1994) agrees with the notion of *sociopragmatic interaction parameters* stating that universal underlying values will influence people's interaction. However, according to him, these values are based on HOFSTEDE's (1980) four cultural dimensions. Consequently, people from different cultures will differ in the degree to which they take some ends of these dimensions as normative ideals to follow. [30]

WIERZBICKA (1994, 1998, 2006) agrees with the idea of values underlying communication. However, according to her approach, these values are completely culture-specific and cannot be categorized into supra-cultural dimensions or scales. Instead, according to WIERZBICKA, these values find their immediate expression in the way people speak. WIERZBICKA (1994, p.3) draws upon the notion of HALL (1976) assuming that culture itself is unconscious to people but that it still influences the ways people think and speak in a rather direct and immediate way WIERZBICKA (1994, p.2) terms as *cultural scripts*. To make these cultural scripts visible from a cross-cultural perspective, they can be expressed and paraphrased using words from *natural semantic metalanguage (NSM)* (WIERZBICKA, 1994, p.20) which the author conceives as a set of approximately 60 *semantic primes*, i.e. central words that exist and have almost exactly the same meaning in all naturally occurring languages. However, WIERZBICKA concedes that the collection of semantic primes will always have to be taken as an academic construction on the mere basis of the author's trial and error experiences (WIERZBICKA, 1994, p.20). [31]

2.3.3 Intercultural competence according to primordialist approaches

Primordial approaches assume that culture is something that already exists when people get involved in interaction and that culture will in some different ways influence the way people communicate. Intercultural communication may thus be taken as prone to an increase of communicative misunderstandings to occur. Communicating in a culturally competent way will thus require interlocutors to learn about the ways culture influences communicative utterances of individuals concerned. To describe this learning process as a process of mutual understanding, social theory may consult hermeneutic approaches to describe this learning process (BREDELLA, 2000; BREDELLA, MEISSNER, NÜNNING & RÖSLER, 2000). Applied versions of phenomenology may describe gaps in people's knowledge and ways of closing these gaps (SCHRÖER, 2002). For these cases, a multitude of forms of intercultural trainings (FOWLER & MUMFORD, 1995; LANDIS & BHAGAT, 1996; RONALD SCOLLON & SCOLLON, 1997; FOWLER & MUMFORD, 1999; MÜLLER-JACQUIER, 2003) is on offer to support individuals improving their intercultural competence. [32]

2.4 The constructionist approach: individuals produce culture

2.4.1 Moving from primordial to constructionist approaches

Several authors criticize that a large part of scholars interested in intercultural communication research have tended to ignore social theory's constructionist turn (MOOSMÜLLER, 2007, p.19), and from this point of view, intercultural communication research seems to process dilemmas that originate just from this primordial perspective and that would not even emerge otherwise. In linguistics for example, scholars pleading for a congruence between language and culture have developed a constructionist approach as well: According to LÜDI, people in intercultural contact will necessarily have an account of at least two different languages—and thus: cultures—and they will be able to consciously make use of their resulting "multilingual repertoire" (LÜDI, 2006, p.12) intentionally creating "translinguistic markers" (LÜDI, 2006, p.13) activating different linguistic prestiges and identities. [33]

Other scholars accept the primordial view on culture but they question culture's inevitable control on people's interaction. ERICKSON and SHULTZ (1982) for example come to the conclusion that culture's influence on interaction cannot be predicted in advance. Instead, whether cultural differences will take effect or not depends much more on the degree to which people feel irritated from interaction on a subjective basis. Accordingly, ERICKSON and SHULTZ illustrate that the more people feel irritated, the more they will give way to unrepaired communicative misunderstandings. Instead of sheer cultural differences, ERICKSON and SHULTZ identified that interactants' co-membership in the same social groups is a much better predictor for people's cooperation vs. their divergence than culture. [34]

Besides of constructionist approaches building upon a primordialist notion of culture in general, others adopt fields and topics of research from primordialist intercultural research and then try to describe and explain the same problems on the basis of the assumption that culture is situationally produced by interactants. So even here, a large number of studies deals with fields familiar to the intercultural reader like intercultural conflicts (TRIANDIS, 2000; RAVIT & CAHANA-AMITAY, 2005), business communication (PÜTZ, 2004), job interviews (AUER & KERN, 2001) and higher education (HU, 2000, 2006). [35]

Of course, still a vast field of approaches tries to completely override primordialist roots and thoughts. Especially anthropologists in the 1980s and 1990s have purported the *practice turn* (SCHATZKI, KNORR-CETINA & SAVIGNY, 2001; RECKWITZ, 2002) explicitly locating culture between individuals mental concepts and their factual action. According to them, especially structuralist notions of culture so far have on the one side made linguistics, especially semiotics, an ideal discipline for the analysis of culture. On the other hand, the notion of culture could not override its structuralist paradigms focusing especially on people's minds and their thinking, and neglecting people's real action. Instead of emphasizing aspects that predetermine individuals' action, approaches from practice theory tend to concede that it is individuals themselves who shape their action. However, this notion of culture as an interplay may then again blur the search for culture's actual location and function in interaction processes. Alternatively, on this behalf, APPADURAI (1996) continues to de-essentialize the notion of culture and locates it in social discourse. Accordingly, culture should be taken as a notion that itself is shaped by social discourse on its matter—including this research paper at hand (APPADURAI, 1996, p.13). [36]

2.4.2 Focusing on individuals' thought vs. their action

Even in constructionist research however, most authors still rather tend to focus on one single perspective, either on people's minds or on their action. On this behalf, MATSUMOTO et al. (2007) distinguish between analyses of individuals' adjustment vs. their adaptation to a new cultural context. Analyzing individuals' forms of adjustment will thus mean looking at changes of their subjective perceptions and evaluations of their surroundings. Looking at aspects of their adaptation in contrast means analyzing changes in their action (MATSUMOTO et al., 2007, p.77f). [37]

From the perspective of this distinction, research on aspects of how people construe processes of intercultural adjustment (see also BRISLIN, 1993) definitely have been much more common than looks at their adaptation. At a very early stage of intercultural research, scholars identified aspects of individual adjustment in terms of stereotypes (LIPPMANN, 1922) that until today form one significant strand of intercultural research (A. THOMAS, 2004). In social psychology, TRIANDIS on this basis had formed the notion of *subjective culture* (TRIANDIS, 1972, p.4). According to him, researchers looking at individuals' affiliations to different cultures will always have to take in a single perspective from which they construe what they see. [38]

BENNETT and HAMMER (BENNETT, 1986; HAMMER, 1999; HAMMER, BENNETT & WISEMAN, 2003) presented their developmental model of intercultural sensitivity (DMIS). According to them, the way culture influences social interaction primarily depends on individuals' cultural worldviews that can be put into a successive series of stages. Here, cultural worldviews specify the degree and the quality to which individuals consider culture to be relevant to their interaction. For the discipline of cultural anthropology, BARTH (1969) stated that actually any cultural differences will necessarily have to be taken as social constructions as a basic principle. [39]

Research on individuals' adaptation to new cultural contexts in contrast has rather been neglected. Some approaches are basing on the notion that boundaries between social groups have grown in history and that on this basis, individuals' action is characterized by separation (BRABANT et al., 2007, p.55). Research on intergroup relations in social psychology heavily draws on these phenomena (TAJFEL, 1981). Most disciplines even seem to lack of adequate empirical methods to capture and to describe people's action in intercultural settings on the basis of constructionist theories. Most of the approaches have to rely on individuals' statements about themselves and the ways they act (for a model of different types of adaptation see BERRY, KIM & BOSKI, 1988). [40]

2.4.3 Culture as knowledge

Like with primordialist approaches to the description of cultural influences, it makes sense to distinguish approaches taking culture as knowledge vs. culture as values in the constructionist field as well. Here, some approaches assume that cultural knowledge has been existing beforehand and that interactants may deliberately make use of it. Other approaches claim that cultural knowledge does not come into being but until people activate it in a relevant situation.[2] [41]

2.4.3.1 Cultural knowledge pre-exists and is available for deliberate application

German philosophy-based sociology of knowledge building on phenomenological thought of Alfred SCHÜTZ (1967) presents an elaborate theory on how mutual understanding of individuals in social contexts may be described. In recent years, interest in this approach has primarily grown in terms of its potential for the description of intercultural communication (MATTHES, 1992; ALTMAYER, 2004; DREHER & STEGMAIER, 2007). [42]

Basing on WEBER's (1980/1922) individualist approach to social interaction SCHÜTZ claims that all theorizing should take individuals and their experiences as its starting points (SCHÜTZ, 1967, p.3). Accordingly, individuals share different patterns of interpretation (SCHÜTZ, 1974/1932) that help them to attribute and to retrieve meaning and sense to and from their surroundings. People perceive their life-worlds in terms of symbolic orders that they interpret in

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2   See also the article by KOCH (2009) in this thematic issue.

similar ways since among their group they share some knowledge on so-called interaction patterns, i.e. on how to interpret their symbolic perceptions. [43]

Cultures in this context may thus be defined as an inventory of knowledge shared and reproduced by the use of interpretation patterns. In this way, individuals even share definitions of what culture itself is supposed to be. PÜTZ (2004, p.27) assumes that these definitions normally will contain essentialist and primordialist views on culture. OEVERMANN (2001) presents an analytical methodology to uncover and to describe a group's interpretation patterns. [44]

Being asked to distinguish between social and cultural influences on interaction, this approach from sociology of knowledge faces some difficulties:[3] SCHÜTZ (1974/1932) claims that it is culture that is responsible for the fact that people are unaware of the uniqueness of their knowledge on interaction patterns. KNOBLAUCH (2001) adds that SCHÜTZ had distinguished three spheres within an individual's life-world. The outermost sphere cannot be accessed directly by individuals but is mediated symbolically. KNOBLAUCH proposes that although all three spheres of different immediacy are interlocked and although SCHÜTZ instead took this sphere as a historical dimension (SCHUTZ, 1967, pp.163-214), the outermost sphere could be termed as a sphere of culture (KNOBLAUCH, 2001, p.24). [45]

Another critical point in sociology of knowledge's approach to the description of intercultural communication may be seen in the relatively broad account of its results: The identification and the description of interaction patterns so far has largely been used to show how individuals and groups construct and maintain social and cultural boundaries. Beyond this however, it seems that this method cannot help to reveal the assumed nature of cultural differences on both sides of these boundaries, i.e. potential culture-specific characteristics. For example, PÜTZ (2004) in his analysis of narrations taken from migrant entrepreneurs in multicultural districts of Berlin reveals that these people construct their business networks in compliance with ethnic group boundaries—and that they will thus be disadvantaged in economic terms because of their constrained network. Similarly, conversation analyst research basing on these theories largely serves to show how individuals draw cultural boundaries while talking (AUER & KERN, 2001, p.108). [46]

Beyond this, scholars on this method rather tend to neglect to look at how people's construction and perception of boundaries might influence the quality of their action. Even further, MOOSMÜLLER (2007, p.27) criticizes that sociology of knowledge cannot specify how exactly individuals access common knowledge and how they agree with their interlocutors on what interpretation patterns are to be used to interpret a given situation. [47]

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3   Also SCHRÖER (2009) in this thematic issue.

2.4.3.2 Cultural knowledge is situationally produced and activated

In contrast to sociology of knowledge, fellows from linguistic anthropology (GOODENOUGH, 1957; GOODWIN & DURANTI, 1992) as well as from ethnography of communication (HYMES, 1964; GUMPERZ, 1982a) claim that individuals construct and mutually agree upon the existence of certain cultural knowledge in any respective situation. According to BAUMAN and SHERZER (1993/1974) ethnography of communication builds upon JAKOBSON's (1990) notion of speech events as an intermediate level of analysis between language and action. Whereas earlier scholars had confined themselves to the mere description of people's culture-specific knowledge, authors like GUMPERZ (1982a) in interactional sociolinguistic claimed that they bring together both culture-specific knowledge and its manifestation in conversation. According to this approach, at the level of speech events people integrate (culturally loaded) context into their utterances to create meaning by using so-called contextualization cues. These may consist of any linguistic signs that conventionally refer to extra-linguistic context making this context relevant for the interpretation of what is said (GUMPERZ & COOK-GUMPERZ, 2007, p.24). Regarding this situational referencing, interlocutors are said to be able to create culturally relevant knowledge during their interaction. In contrast, scholars would not be able to list a certain number of fixed contextualization cues that might be characteristic to one culture. Some parts of this contextual knowledge may be termed as cultural although distinctions between mere contextual vs. cultural cues may turn out to be tricky. Current empirical applications of the method may be found in AUER and DI LUZIO (1992) in a general perspective as well as in DI LUZIO, GÜNTHNER and ORLETTI (2001) with a special focus on intercultural communication. To emphasize the connection between individuals' utterances and their action, later authors have introduced the notion of *communicative practices* that are performed by *communities of practice* (SARANGI & VAN LEEUWEN, 2003; CORDER & MEYERHOFF, 2007). [48]

One critical point in this methodology may be seen in the fact that in the end, researchers themselves will need to spot and to declare cultural influences by themselves: In a repeated process they will need to identify frequently occurring linguistic utterances with constant co-occurring contexts (2007, p.23). Whether a co-occurrence may be taken as significant or not, for which group it is relevant and whether a context may be taken as constant will need to be stated by researchers from their own cultural perspective. [49]

2.4.4 Culture as values

Regarding society's perceived intricacy of intercultural communication, GUMPERZ (2001) concedes that people's mere lack of knowledge on cultural contextualizations of communication cannot account for any complete communication breakdown. Instead, individuals tend to substitute lacking contextual knowledge by negative stereotyping. Normally, these stereotypes are taken from society's ideological discourse and they provide a basis for individuals' interpretation and action in intercultural contexts. These orientations from

discourse may be taken as value-based: Discourse in these contexts defines desirable as well rejectable issues as values and norms. [50]

When scholars look at culture as values from a constructionist perspective, their approaches may differ in the degree to which they assume that individuals will consciously decide whether or not they want to stick to existing values or whether even they will be able to produce and agree upon new values of a cultural character in a given situation. [51]

2.4.4.1 Cultural values exist and may be activated spontaneously

Most of the research referred on cross-cultural stereotyping in Section 3.2.2 may be taken as approaches that assume people more or less consciously recurring to values that they equate to culture. Social scientists additionally developed the notion of discourse assuming that all communication is based on underlying ideology through which individuals interpret the world. Discourse theories from the social sciences laid the ground in particular for linguists and literary scholars to develop empirical methods of discourse analysis to uncover the influence of ideological discourse on communication. Considering that academic research will always be goal-driven and that it will never be able to be carried out from a completely neutral social stance, many discourse analysts declared (critical) discourse analysis as a political project. Most authors in this field try to uncover social inequalities and forms of discrimination. However, contemporary discourse analysis may be rooted in different theoretical bases: For example, while WODAK (1989) draws on HABERMAS' (1983) discourse ethics, JÄGER (1993) and FAIRCLOUGH (1995) recur to FOUCAULT's (1984/1969) discourse theory, whereas VAN DIJK (1977, 1998) purports ideas from studies on cognition. While a large part of the approaches from discourse research identifies influences of culture on interaction in manifestations of racism, the contributions of KNAPP, ENNINGER and KNAPP-POTTHOFF (1987) present a broader perspective on central objectives of intercultural communication research. [52]

2.4.4.2 Cultural values are created spontaneously

While the former approaches assume that individuals may actively refer to cultural norms that they interpret as given, other authors go even further and try to uncover how interactants construct and agree upon newly created norms. Building on a primordial understanding of the term culture, CASMIR states that these new systems of norms created in intercultural contact may be termed as a "third realm" (CASMIR, 1978, p.249) or even a "third culture" (CASMIR, 1993, p.408). Similarly, DIRSCHERL (2004) derives a notion of third spaces from FOUCAULT's (1994) concept of heterotopia. By means of discourse and con-versation analyst methods, KOOLE and TEN THIJE (1994) reveal how inter-actants in intercultural contact attribute each other different discourse positions making each other experts and representatives for their respective cultures that remain acknowledged and unquestioned for the respective situation. [53]

The preceding paragraphs have demonstrated that research on intercultural communication in the last five decades has compiled a vast variety of theoretical and methodological approaches to its central object of study, and this observation may contribute one additional viewpoint to the current paragraph's category: Accordingly, it should not be neglected that in parallel, intercultural communication has also been an issue of discourse in people's everyday life in Western societies, all the time. Many people are used to permanently integrate aspects of cultural or ethnic belongings as well as assumed cultural or ethnic characteristics into their thinking and into their interpretations of their surroundings. In parallel to academic approaches to culture and intercultural communication, it may be assumed that individuals have their own notions of what culture means to them and in what ways culture plays a role in their everyday interaction. Individual experiences, but primarily as well receptions of social discourse, mass media reception and even parts of academic theories that have found their ways into social discourse may contribute to these individual notions of culture. Compared to academically derived notions of culture, these individual notions may be assumed to considerably influence these individuals' social interaction. [54]

The idea of making use of individuals' subjective notions of culture for analyzing intercultural communication so far has largely been neglected. However, empirical research on these notions may provide a new framework for additional fruitful insights into how interplays between culture and social interaction may be conceived (BUSCH, 2008a). As one crucial point of departure to this approach, researchers will need to keep in mind the fact that their own object of study, i.e. intercultural communication, itself results from social and academic discourse. From this perspective, the fact that academics explore aspects of intercultural communication is one precondition for the subject to come into being, at all. This insight into the constructivist character of one's own objects of study has been developed much further in the field of gender studies. Here, according to BUTLER (1990, 1993), the mere idea that sex exists as a given natural category before individuals get socialized according to social notions of gender, needs to be taken as part of social discourse on gender itself. [55]

Some scholars have started to hint at a number of parallels between objects of study in gender studies and intercultural communication research as academic disciplines (MAE, 2003, p.195). Transferring the notion of a constructed basis from gender studies to intercultural research may lead to the insight that similar to sex and gender, the notion of an a priori existence of culture before producing discourse on it must be taken as part of this discourse itself. [56]

Butler discusses the hegemonic dichotomization between males and females in Western societies and wants to break it on a political level. A similar approach may reveal comparable "materializations" (BUTLER, 1993, p.4) in intercultural research: Here, many cultural boundaries come out to be produced by hegemonic discourse (ANG & ST LOUIS, 2005). According to Butler, materializations result from a permanent iteration of norms. Here, Butler does not take iterations of norms as completely constant and static but as changing and as

a result of congealed memories of the past (BUTLER, 1993, p.244): Norms to be iterated will be remembered in a more and more imprecise and vague way over time. Materializations will thus also include processes of permanent change. To explain this, BUTLER refers to DERRIDA's concept of *iterability* (BUTLER, 1993, p.70) developed on a discussion of AUSTIN and SEARLE's speech act theory (BUTLER, 1993, p.224). Accordingly, individuals in intercultural contact may be seen as iterating social norms on how to deal with culture as a potential issue. [57]

To reveal integrations of culture into individual's interaction by means of empirical analysis, *membership categorization analysis (MCA)* (MOERMANN, 1988; HESTER & EGLIN, 1997; JALBERT, 1999; LEPPER, 2000) may serve as a promising example to produce significant insights into social interaction (BUSCH, 2008b, p.36). MCA as a method for textual analysis was developed from SACKS' notion of *membership categorization devices (MCD)* (SACKS, 1974, p.218) building on the premises of ethnomethodology (GARFINKEL, 1967). According to this approach, individuals by interaction put people and objects into different constructed categories (membership categorization). Devices from the perspective of MCD are higher-ranking units helping individuals to interrelate several categories into meaningful context. Categories in this concept may additionally be specified by corresponding "category-bound activities" (SACKS, 1974, p.221). Individuals take these activities as characteristic for people or objects from a certain category. Later, authors like JAYYUSI (1984) as well as STOKOE and SMITHSON (2002) have applied MCA to the analysis of construction of socially relevant categories like deviant behavior (JAYYUSI) and gender (STOKOE & SMITHSON). SACKS had encouraged scholars to expand the notion of category-bound activities designating it as "inference-rich" (SACKS, 1992, p.179). Relying on this, STOKOE and SMITHSON present the notion of "category-bound performances" (STOKOE & SMITHSON, 2002, p.101). Accordingly, BUTLER's notion of performative action basing on discursive materializations may be integrated into the concept of membership categorization: Membership categorization from this perspective may help individuals to decide according to which materialization to treat people in their surroundings—and in intercultural contact. [58]

2.4.5 Intercultural competence according to constructionist approaches

While primordialist approaches come to the conclusion that people in intercultural contact will need to put additional effort into understanding their foreign partners in a conversation, constructionist approaches resume that people instead will need to struggle to agree upon a common perspective onto the role and the relevance of culture to their interaction. While some approaches lead to clear recommendations for cooperative interaction (TEN THIJE, 2006, p.117), others come to rather general conclusions providing insights into the scope of action individuals are supposed to manage in intercultural contact. GUDYKUNST for example pleads for a growth of "mindfulness" (GUDYKUNST, 1993, p.40): As long as interactants keep in mind that intercultural communication may hide some obstacles for mutual understanding they will be able to adapt their interpretations and their action respectively. Regarding the approach last mentioned, individuals

should learn about the constructionist character of the idea of culture itself. On this basis, they may learn to re-consider their scope of action in a given situation. [59]

3. Conclusion

The survey in this paper may reveal that firstly, research concepts on intercultural communication are based on a multitude of different notions of what culture is supposed to be. As a consequence, the approaches mentioned claim different points and different ways in which culture as defined is supposed to influence people's interaction. Primordialist concepts of culture assume that culture exits prior to a given situation. People's interaction will thus be influenced by culture in different ways that are outside their awareness and their scope of action. Constructionist approaches instead assume that culture and its influence on interaction are constituted in different ways within a given situation. Accordingly, individuals are agreed different scopes on how to deal with culture. Another relevant distinction may be seen in whether scholars roughly conceive culture as knowledge or as norms and values: Taking culture as a form of knowledge encourages theories expecting people to be able to learn and then apply the knowledge of a new culture. This process may come out to be more complicated if culture is seen as a form of values or norms: Culture then will play a role that tends to be unaware to individuals. Additionally, cultural affiliation then turns into an issue that is subject to people's arbitrary assessment and evaluation, e.g. on the basis of hegemonic discourse. This large variety of concepts may be taken as a great gift to intercultural communication research: it may help to shed light onto aspects of intercultural communication that may play a role in extremely different contexts of human life. Besides of that, intercultural communication research frequently serves as a basis for education: On the basis of research findings, individuals are supposed to be taught and to learn how to interact in more competent ways when cultural aspects may be at issue. Depending on the underlying theory, evaluations of what people are able to do or what they are able to learn to better manage intercultural interaction may vary significantly (BUSCH, 2008b). From this perspective, research and education on intercultural communication as well as on intercultural competence may improve even further if the strong bias of underlying theory will be assessed in an even more critical way. [60]

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