

Research Academic Paper

An inquiry into the lack of homogenization of cultures

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Abstract

It is pretty well accepted that we are in a globalized world. The ease in access to global communication has made it easier for people from different cultures to communicate. This mass communication has been made easier by the technological advances that have been made in the last twenty years, such as the Internet and portable devices. Nevertheless, this does not mean that we have eradicated miscommunication in the world. Moreover, people have still conserved their own culture, in spite of global communication. This leads us to wonder- will the world ever move towards one generalized, global culture? In spite of what the facts may lead us to think, I will try to explain in this paper why globalization will not to a unique, homogenized world culture.

Firstly, I will draw upon the conclusions of Geert Hofstede on cultural dimensions to talk about miscommunications and how they relate to the cultures of reference. This part of my paper intends to explain the lack of homogeneity between cultures. Secondly, I will draw upon research done about globalization to shed some light upon the fact that we have not attained a world culture yet. This point will be discussed to expose how globalization and cultures interact. Finally, I will conclude by confirming the link between cultures and identity. The argument will show that both of these notions are as diverse as they come.

Cultural dimensions and miscommunications

For people who have been initiated to intercultural competency, the name of Geert Hofstede must have been heard before. He is famous for his work on cultural dimensions, which can be found in his publication *Culture's Consequences: Comparing Values, Behaviors, Institutions, and Organizations Across Nations*. (Geert Hofstede, Second Edition, Thousand Oaks CA: Sage Publications, 2001). In this book, he provides several tools to help understand that people's values are different depending on the culture those people are from. He calls those differences cultural dimensions. Indeed, people will not project the same feedback in the same situation depending on the reaction they were taught was proper by their home culture. To explain this point, Hofstede wrote: "If we recognize culture as an all-encompassing influence on our mental programming, [the fact that theories fit value patterns] should be no surprise." (p.18).

Dimensions are indicators that help measure how a culture is performing on a scale, so that cross-cultural study might be made possible. Even though we hold some values to be universal rights (liberty, women's rights for instance), the importance of those values shifts from one culture to the next. Hofstede provides the example of France and the United States on the dimension (or scale) going from Pragmatism (belonging to France) to Indulgence (the US scored high on this side): " " (Cultural Tools- Country Comparison. (n.d.). Retrieved October 12, 2014, from <http://geert-hofstede.com/united-states.html>).

The fact that the place of values changes depending on the culture the () identifies with changes is, in my humble opinion, the reason why miscommunication can happen in spite of having a common language. Taking from the knowledge that Hofstede provides for us an individualistic society reports well-being on an individual scale. On the other end, the members of a communalistic culture end of the scale do not mind sacrificing a bit of their happiness for the common good (see comparative study aforementioned about France and the US). This is why the adjective "fair" does not echo the same meaning in both cultures- for the former, it might refer to the reward of the individual who labored. For the latter, it will refer to the notion of equality. Therefore, when vocabulary can not convey the importance of the value associated with the message, there is a gap in communication.

Although intercultural communication is a growing field (especially among the well-educated people), it might not manage to remove the lens that culture provides people-can intercultural communication remove the lens that culture has pulled over ()'s eyes? In my opinion, it allows senders and receivers to feel sympathy and understand how the other person's processes. It does not, however, change someone's communication style. Therefore, miscommunication can happen if either the speaker or the receiver forgets to switch styles, or is simply unaware of this difference.

Globalization and the shaping of cultures

The field of intercultural communication has been made mainstream thanks to the progress in communication that has happened over the last twenty years. Thanks to technological advancements, mass communication but also interpersonal relations across the globe have been made considerably easier. As English has become the Lingua Franca of the Internet (data?), a language barrier has been lifted. The infiltration of Anglicisms (i.e. adaptation of English word in the local language) has been one of the clues of the shaping of cultures against the American culture. However, it would be incorrect to say that the shaping of cultures has led to one globalized, unique culture.

The Connection between Culture and Identity

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To assert my opinion of why this is so, I will call upon anthropology. (quote research?) This safekeeping of local cultures is due to the fact that nations have felt the need to get closer, because they have been exposed to outside influences. Having to summarize and justify what one's culture is about might make the individuals who identify within it more aware of its attributes. In short, what seemed normal to someone is highlighted by the fact that someone else questions it.

Citations

I) Cultural dimensions and miscommunications

Hofstede, Geert. *Culture's Consequences: Comparing Values, Behaviors, Institutions, and Organizations Across Nations*. Second Edition, Thousand Oaks CA: Sage Publications, 2001.

Cultural Tools- Country Comparison. (n.d.). Retrieved October 12, 2014, from <http://geert-hofstede.com/united-states.html>

II) Globalization and the shaping of cultures

III) The Connection between Culture and Identity