Communication in Multicultural Settings: Resources and Strategies for Affiliation and Identity

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Introduction

Twenty years ago, communication between people who were different in certain ways was called „cross-cultural communication“. Somewhat the same thing is now more usually called „intercultural communication“. These two strands of research flow out of each other and their practitioners don’t usually think of them as contrasting. But they are based in some important ways on different ideas about what kinds of speakers and communicative situations are the norm. I’d like to begin by tracing the differences between the two ways of imagining communication and otherness that I think are implied in research on „cross-cultural“ and „intercultural“ communication. I’ll suggest that each is based on a different notion of the relationships between nations, cultures, and people, as well as on different assumptions about the default situations in which nations, cultures, and people meet. Then I would like to sketch the emergence of a third approach, one which might label the phenomena in question „multicultural communication“.

Multicultural communication, I will suggest, is increasingly the norm in the relatively heterogeneous, unfocussed, multiethnic, polyglot conditions that characterize the social worlds of more and more people everywhere. These are situations in which nations and cultures, or people and cultures, are not in one-to-one correspondence, but instead individuals draw on social and linguistic resources from many cultures. As a result, different ways of acting and taking meet within individuals rather than at social boundaries or within social groups. Work that sees communication among people who are different as „multicultural“ argues for a less deterministic view of the relationship between culture and linguistic behavior than is suggested in the frameworks of cross-cultural or intercultural communication.

In the process of sketching these three approaches, I’ll summarize a number of studies, by me and by others. At the end, I will briefly explore two metaphors for what happens when languages and cultures meet in individuals: the metaphor
of crossing suggested by sociolinguist Ben Rampton, and the metaphor of borderlands/fronteras suggested by Chicana writer Gloria Anzaldúa.

I should stress two things before I go into more detail. First, because I am a linguist, I will focus mainly on ideas about communication and culture that have to do with language. But I do not mean to be claiming that language is all there is to intercultural communication. Other papers presented at this conference, by anthropologists, political scientists, communication professionals, and others abundantly illustrated some of the other factors that influence whether and how different people get along. Second, although I do mean to argue for the usefulness of distinguishing three perspectives that I will call cross-cultural, intercultural, and multicultural, I do not mean to be arguing for these particular ways of defining the terms cross-cultural, intercultural, and multicultural. These terms have been used in a variety of ways for a variety of reasons. Many people whose work would fit best into my "cross-cultural" framework identify it as work on "intercultural" communication; the term "multicultural" has come, at least in the U.S., to have political connotations that are not necessarily implied in my use of the term. What I am trying to do is to describe three ways of thinking that I think can be distinguished no matter what each is called.

The material in the sections that follow is summarized in Table 1.

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<th>CROSS-CULTURAL</th>
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<td>*&quot;foreign&quot; language teaching</td>
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<td>*communication vs. non-communication</td>
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Table 1: Summary of three approaches to communication and others

The "Cross-cultural" Communication Perspective

Research undertaken from what I will call the "cross-cultural" communication perspective is based (explicitly or not) on a set of assumptions about languages and speakers and boundaries that will seem familiar to people my age or older. It's the set of unstated beliefs I grew up with. Research in this paradigm is often based on the theoretical assumption that the typical situation is one in which one nation corresponds to one culture (a nation's culture is sometimes referred to as its "national character") and that one culture corresponds to one language. The best described situation in this framework is the situation of the European monolingual nationstate, founded on principles of nationalisms developed in the nineteenth century. (In nineteenth-century nationalistic theory, shared language and shared culture were two of the "pillars" on which nations were ideally perched.) Within a nation of this sort, what suits one suits all, and the nation-based linguistics on which "cross-cultural" research is based pays scant attention to variation within national traditions (except for variation between "correct" and "incorrect" forms). Cultures meet, in this framework of thought, at political boundaries, which are also boundaries between distinct cultural groups.

Explanatory concepts that work well in this framework include the idea of a "national language", which is assumed to correspond to the "native language" of a nation's citizens. Being able to use more than one language is associated with belonging to more than one political group, and, just as they might have dual citizenship, bilinguals might rely on dual coding in the brain, their two languages being mentally separate and chosen mainly according to where they found themselves geographically. Moving from one language to another is referred to as "switching", a metaphor that suggests an abrupt change of state. When a person went to a new country, he or she would experience "culture shock" as a result of the abrupt immersion in an incompatible system.

In the "cross-cultural" framework, language education is FLT, foreign language teaching. If you learn another language, you are able to communicate across linguistic and cultural boundaries; if you don't know the other language, you don't communicate. Intermediate forms and levels of international and interlinguistic communication do not figure clearly in the idealization.

In this framework, the best described situation would be contact between people who are very different: a Japanese and an American, for example. The most obvious situations in which cross-cultural communication would occur, hence the situations that are most likely to be studied, would involve, for example, foreign students and their native-speaking hosts, or business people from different countries. Recent work in this framework includes, for example, special

Let me give two examples of research that I think is based on this set of assumptions. (Note again that not everyone uses the terms „cross-cultural“ and „intercultural“ the way I am using them in this essay.) The first is a paper by Robert Kaplan called „Cultural thought patterns in intercultural education“ that was published in 1966. This study has been very influential, particularly in educational circles. This is partly because Kaplan gives an easy-to-remember explanation for a phenomenon that every foreign language teacher has noticed: students don't just have grammatical problems, they also have discourse-level problems, particularly in writing. Papers that are correctly spelled and that parse completely sometimes still don't work, because their structure is problematic on a more global level. Kaplan attributes this phenomenon to differences among cultures in processes of thought: „... each language and each culture has a paragraph order unique to itself, and ... part of the learning of a particular language is the mastering of its logical system“ (p. 14). While English speakers, Kaplan says, think and write in the straight-line pattern represented on the left-hand side of the diagram reproduced as Figure 1, the thought and paragraph patterns of other language groups have other shapes. Semitic thinking and writing involves parallelism, for example; writers of Romance languages digress often.

![Diagram from Kaplan 1966, p. 15](image)

One problem with this is that Kaplan confuses thinking with writing. If we wrote exactly the way we think, writing would be a great deal easier than it is. And of course „digress“ is a rather loaded term – from what do Romance speakers supposedly „digress“ except the straight line of English? It's no great coincidence, I think, that Kaplan's own system is the straight, direct, effective one.

Though, to be fair, Kaplan does stress that he is not criticizing other languages' paragraph structures, it is difficult, given his theoretical framework, to remember this. If cultures and languages are assumed to be fundamentally different, not similar, and if the boundaries between linguistic and cultural systems are seen as sources of potential conflict rather than potential creativity, then these kinds of problems are almost bound to occur.

I thought it was fair, or at least not too unfair, to single out Kaplan’s paper for some criticism, because it has had so much influence; my sniping at it obviously hasn't hurt Kaplan’s career. But to be even fairer I have decided to use some work of my own as a second way to highlight what the cross-cultural approach does and what it fails to do. This is a paper I wrote a decade ago called „Arguments with Khomeini: Rhetorical situation and persuasive style in crosscultural perspective“ (Johnstone 1986).

More often than not, studies of cross-cultural communication arise from observations of cross-cultural miscommunication. My study was no exception; it had as its starting point an extreme example of what can go wrong when two people with very different epistemologies and norms for communicative behavior, as well as apparently clashing personalities, attempt to use language to change each other’s minds. The result was crude verbal violence and complete failure to communicate. In 1979, the Italian journalist Oriana Fallaci was granted an interview with Iran’s Ayatollah Khomeini. The interview turned into an abusive argument during which Fallaci stripped off the chador she was wearing, and Khomeini eventually ended it by throwing Fallaci out. In the paper, I examine the text of the interview to see what went wrong, and I propose explanations on two levels. The first is the level of strategies of logical argumentation: Khomeini repeatedly made explicit the ultimate logical grounding for his arguments — the reason on which all other reasons are based: „Islam is superior“. This strategy sounds odd to Western ears. (Fallaci never said „Democracy is superior“, though this belief clearly underlay most of her arguments). Furthermore, the strategy of stating and restating one’s deepest beliefs is unlikely to work in a situation in which people don’t share fundamental beliefs; it is a religious revival meeting strategy, not one (to Westerners) for contentious political debate.

Khomeini and Fallaci also made different choices of overall persuasive style. Fallaci presented logical arguments; Khomeini used analogical persuasive strategies like example and parable. I discussed cultural reasons for Khomeini’s and Fallaci’s predisposition to use different rhetorical strategies on both levels.

I tried to stress in the paper that rhetorical strategies emerge in particular situations and that interlocutors communicating in good faith can adapt to one another's styles. But it was difficult, given the assumptions about culture and
communication I started with, to do justice to the fact that both interlocutors could have made other choices than they did. This was particularly true in Khomeini’s case: he had spent many years in Paris and knew, or could have tried to figure out, what Fallaci was doing. My assumption that each person had just one basic way of acting and talking led me to look for and at clashes like this one rather than at the far more common situations in which people who are different (as any two people are) do manage to communicate.

This is more generally true, I think, of work in the „cross-cultural“ framework. Work in this framework has trouble incorporating several kinds of things. For one thing, it makes it difficult to talk about the fact that people can use language in more than one way. Research in the one-person-one-culture mold also doesn’t provide an easy way of dealing with how people learn new patterns of communication, or how patterns change. For example, some Arabs do learn to write in native-sounding English without in the process becoming schizophrenic. And Arabic expository prose has changed in the last several decades, so that now the traditional parallelistic, poetic style schematically depicted in Kaplan’s diagram is less and less common. Furthermore, research in this mold makes it difficult to see individuals who do not behave in the way they are expected to on the basis of their language or their culture. And, of course, work that is based on the one-nation-one-language idealization tends not to be about the majority of the nations and individuals in the world, who are not monolingual or monocultural.

The „Intercultural“ communication perspective

People who take what I’m calling an „intercultural“ perspective on communication across boundaries assume that the default situation is one in which one social group rather than one nation corresponds to one culture and to one native language or way of using language. This partly reflects the increasing 20th-century recognition, in many Western nations, of „minority groups“ with civil rights, as well the increasing social integration among ethnic groupings (at least in public arenas), which has given rise in some places to more frequent interethnic contact. It is also related to people’s increasing awareness of and pride in non-dominant affiliations.

In this framework, individuals’ worlds are seen as defined primarily by their native language or native way of using language and by their native cultural socialization. „Cultures“ are no longer associated mainly with nations, but now sometimes with ethnic groups, races, genders, sexual orientations, or even socio-economic status, as in „the culture of poverty“. The major social boundaries are boundaries between group identities rather than national boundaries. Languages and cultures meet, then, at the boundaries between distinct social groups that interact in limited circumstances. People’s behavior, and their interpretations of others’ behavior, is seen as made inevitable by social facts about them.

Explanatory concepts that work well in this framework include the idea of „native“ language and „native“ culture, the first sources of socialization which are dominant throughout one’s life and in any situation. „Biculturalism“ supplements bilingualism as a possibility. It’s still seen as involving „code-switching“ and may not always include mastery of both „discourse systems.“ Biculturalism is, in this way of thinking, now possible to imagine within a nation and sometimes encouraged (especially for subordinate „minority“ groups).

Language teaching is easiest seen in this framework as SLT: „second“-language teaching, since second languages are not necessarily foreign ones. Language education may include or comprise sensitivity training to other ways of using language even when one already knows the grammar, since speakers of the same language may have different ways of using it. The possibilities are not, then, either communication or non-communication, since miscommunication (that is, communication that fails only in one key way) can be the result of contact among people with different native languages and/or cultures. In fact, miscommunication is often seen as the most likely result of intercultural contact.

In this framework, the best described situation would be contact between people of different cultures within a nation. The most obvious situations in which intercultural communication would occur, hence the situations people are likely to study, would be situations in which people of different cultures regularly interacted in public. In many cases the two groups share a language; the differences that tend to be scrutinized are differences in how the language is used and interpreted: in how people speak and when and how they mean by what they say.

One example of research in this framework is summarized in an anecdote which I quote at length from John Gumperz’ (1982) well-known work on „discourse strategies“:

In a staff cafeteria at a major British airport, newly hired Indian and Pakistani women were perceived as surly and uncooperative by their supervisor as well as by the cargo handlers whom they served. Observation revealed that while relatively few words were exchanged, the intonation and manner in which these words were pronounced were interpreted negatively. For example, when a cargo handler who had chosen meat was asked whether he wanted gravy, a British assistant would
say “Gravy?” using rising intonation. The Indian assistants, on the other hand, would say the word using falling intonation: “Gravy.” We taped relevant sequences, including interchanges like these, and asked the employees to paraphrase what was meant in each case. At first the Indian workers saw no difference. However, the English teacher and the cafeteria supervisor could point out that “Gravy”, said with a falling intonation, is likely to be interpreted as ‘This is gravy’ i.e. not interpreted as an offer but rather as a statement, which in the context seems redundant and consequently rude. When the Indian women heard this, they began to understand the reactions they had been getting all along which had until then seemed incomprehensible. They then spontaneously recalled intonation patterns which had seemed strange to them when spoken by native English speakers. At the same time, supervisors learned that the Indian women’s falling intonation was their normal way of asking questions in that situation, and that no rudeness or indifference was intended. (p. 173)

The social boundary here is between ethnic groups and the linguistic boundary between ways of using and interpreting English. Like most work on intercultural communication, it is a study of miscommunication between two groups which are also segregated in other ways (economically or socially) and who talk to each other only for a limited set of reasons.

Ron and Suzanne Scollon’s work on intercultural communication in Alaska is also well known. In “Athabaskan-English Interethic Communication” (1981) they diagnose miscommunications that occur in situations created by “legal and economic pressures” that “have made many individuals feel that it is necessary in pursuit of their own best interests for them to engage in communication with members of other ethnic groups” (11). Among these are, for example, job interviews, usually involving Athabaskan applicants and Anglo supervisors. Differences in what Scollon and Scollon call “communicative patterns” create problems in the interviews, even though the Athabaskans speak English (and in fact may not speak any Athabaskan language). Scollon and Scollon examine how Anglos and Athabaskans present themselves to others (Anglos feel that talk is appropriate at the beginning of a new relationship, as a way to get to know a person, whereas Athabaskans prefer to wait to talk until their interlocutors are already familiar). They also examine how Athabaskans and Anglos express social dominance and subordination (Anglo subordinates are the ones expected to be the performers, whereas Athabaskan superiors are the performers). They describe differences in the distribution of talk:

Athabaskans pause for longer between sentences than Anglos expect them to, for example, so Anglos end up unintentionally interrupting and grabbing the floor. Athabaskans are uncomfortable with leave-taking formulas that refer to the future, feeling that talking about the future is a way of courting the evil eye, so they say nothing at the ends of interactions.

Differences like these result in ethnic stereotyping, as Athabaskans decide that all Anglos talk too much, show off too much, and interrupt too much, and as Anglos decide that Athabaskans (like the Pakistani cafeteria employees) are surly and uncooperative.

Scollon and Scollon argue for a sort of sensitivity training to encourage people from each group to see the other’s behavior as the result of differing communicative patterns rather than intentional rudeness. But they are hesitant to recommend that anyone adopt anyone else’s ways of talking, and skeptical that that would even be possible. The chapter ends with a section entitled “A Caution About Change” in which Scollon and Scollon claim that changing a person’s discourse patterns means changing a person’s identity: “If someone says that an English speaker should be less talkative, less self-assertive, less interested in the future, he is saying at the same time that he should become a different person” (p. 37). Change is, in general, difficult to deal with in the framework of intercultural communication, since people’s behavior is seen as determined by their culture and language.

Work in this framework also has trouble incorporating individuals who can act in more than one way, and people who act in ways that are not predicted on the basis of their culture and language. This model of communication sees people as highly constrained by cultural socialization, so it also tends to make it hard to notice the ways in which people’s choices can be strategic, consciously or unconsciously: how communicative patterns can be adapted to situation and interlocutors rather than automatic. Furthermore, it is not easy in this model to account for fragmentary, incomplete knowledge of one’s “native” language and/or culture, like that of many Athabaskans, for that matter (Charley Basham, personal communicadon), or to account for the fact that most speakers have more or less expertise in several ways of acting, talking, and being. As Florian Coulmas (1981) and others have pointed out, the concept of the “native” speaker is not unproblematic. It is also frustratingly difficult, in “intercultural” communication research, to see exactly how people could ever get along successfully across boundaries. Sensitivity training notwithstanding, if people’s early cultural and linguistic socialization forces them to act in certain ways and not others, and if to adopt new communicative strategies or expectations is to change one’s personality, then adaptation seems utopian.
The "Multicultural" communication perspective

In what I will call the "multicultural communication" framework, an individual is seen as potentially having access to multiple cultures, multiple ways of using language. The normal situations, in this framework, are multi-ethnic, polyglot ones that involve communication at and across social and linguistic boundaries, and the normal speakers are ones with multiple competences. Language is seen as the result of choices from among resources provided by multiple models, choices which can be strategic (rhetorical) or expressive of self. Cultures and languages meet, then, within individuals, who group themselves and are grouped by others, for various and changing purposes, into various social groups.

Explanatory concepts that work well in this framework include the idea of linguistic resources (rather than "native" and "second" language or varieties), the idea that, that at least some people may not have one strongly dominant way of being, acting, or talking, but might instead regularly draw on multiple cultures and languages. Bakhtin's (1980) concept of "heteroglossia" also works well in this framework of ideas, as do approaches to multilingualism that stress "code-mixing" and the possibility of a range of kinds and levels of multiple language use (see, for example, Gardner-Chloros 1995). Rather than seeing cultures and languages as monolithic wholes of which one could either have one (and be monolingual and/or monocultural) or two (and be bicultural and/or bilingual), this approach makes it possible to think in terms of relative cultural and linguistic "focusing" and "diffusion" (LePage and Tabouret-Keller 1985): beliefs and ways of talking are sometimes, for some purposes, widely shared, and sometimes relatively idiosyncratic and variable. Discourse in the multicultural mode tends to be not as much about "native languages" or "second languages" as about varieties used in different contexts: "home languages", "school languages", "standard languages". In this context, in which non-standard varieties are taken more seriously, discussion of processes and politics of standardization (and of resistance to standardization) become more likely. Language teaching is now seen increasingly as LSP: languages for "special purposes" such as commerce or academia (even the most traditional "foreign" languages in the U.S., French and German, are now offered more and more often in specialized sections like German for business" or "French reading), and it becomes possible to envision language learners as people who take a Peircean stance of "broadness", adopting some aspects of cultural, resisting others, creating a sort of "inter-culture" as they create "interlanguage" (Kramsch 1993). Communication across boundaries is always partial, from the multicultural perspective, since no two people control or use exactly the same set of resources.

In this framework, the best described situation would be speech among people who have multiple resources to draw on: people exposed to multicultural settings (often, though by no means exclusively, "minority group" members), to the media; people who live or work at social boundaries. The most obvious situations in which multicultural communication would occur, hence the situations people are likely to study, would be, for example, public speech, or speech in public institutions that mix people from various areas or groups (such as schools).

Let me give two examples of research in this framework. The first, which I'll summarize only extremely briefly, is the work of Ben Rampton (1985) in England. Rampton has been studying adolescents in two multiethnic neighborhoods where children of Caribbean Black ancestry, East Asians, and white Angles mingle and compete in school and in youth clubs. His interest is in what he calls "crossing", or the use of language varieties associated with ethnic groups other than one's own -- for example, the use of Caribbean Creole-sounding speech by Asians and whites or of Panjabi by whites or Afro-Caribbeans. He finds that crossing occurs at moments when social relationships are in question, when the ordered flow of habitual social life is loosened" (p. 281), often at the boundaries of expected routines. Crossing serves sometimes to challenge expected relationships, as when adolescents use Indian-sounding English in somewhat playful resistance to teachers, and it is used in games, in music, in interaction across sexes. Making use, however briefly and occasionally, of linguistic resources associated with other groups allows these adolescents to construct "a new inheritance from within multiracial interaction itself" (p. 297).

Rather than focussing on communication (or, more usually, miscommunication) across boundaries, Rampton focusses on communication at the boundaries. This is what I've also begun to do, in a different way, in the work I'm doing, with Judith Bean, in Texas, which I'd now like to talk about briefly.

Both outsiders and Texans tend to think that there is a single linguistic model towards which all Texans either aim or decide not to aim: something called "Texas speech" or "talking Texan". Texans' sense of linguistic unity and uniqueness is part of a more general sense, rooted in history and now encouraged in education and commerce, that Texas is special, bigger and better and different than any other state. (Or any other country, for that matter.) But even the most casual observation shows that not all Texans speak alike, nor do all share the same norms for speech. There are many very different resources available in Texas for the creation and display of idiosyncratic ways of being and sounding, and the many Texans who interact with outside their immediate communities, either privately or in more public media, have access to varying sets of these resources. Texas is a particularly suitable locale for a study of the
of these resources. Texas is a particularly suitable locale for a study of the linguistic effects of multiple cultural models. To varying degrees, people in Texas speak English like southerners, like Californians, like midwesterners; they speak Spanish, Tex-Mex, Vietnamese, German, Czech; they use features of African-American English Vernacular and traditions of African-American oratory; they project colorful, direct western personalities or genteeel, indirect southern ones. Texans shape languages to use as they shape individual identities in the „multidimensional social space“ (LePage and Tabouret-Keller 1985) suggested by these and other possibilities.

Not all linguistic possibilities are open to all Texans: not all speak Spanish equally well, for example, and some are only able to make small symbolic stabs at sounding Southern. Some Texans do continue to live in tightly focused communities in which linguistic resources are limited and homogeneity is accordingly high. We are not trying to undo the results of dialectology based in such communities, but rather to extend the study of linguistic variation so that it provides a model of the language of people in other, more public contexts as well.

We are interested in a setting in which there are multiple models for how to talk and in educated, mobile, middle-class people (not unlike ourselves) whose social ties to one another and to some of the people they seek to influence are public rather than private (and who accordingly frequently employ public modes of discourse such as speech-making, teaching, publishing, recording, and so on). In such settings, we think, linguistic variation can best be understood as the result of individuals’ creation of distinct voices that express changeable, idiosyncratic identities. We think that this process involves individual speakers’ selection and combination of resources provided by the regional and social models available to them.

To give you just one brief example of how this can work, let’s look at an excerpt from a newspaper column by Molly Ivins. Ivins is a political commentator and humorist who is well known throughout the United States. She is a liberal writing about a very conservative state, thus both an outsider and an insider in Texas, and her audience includes both Texans and non-Texans, people who agree with her and people who violently disagree. She manages the competing demands by shifting apparently effortlessly between a way of talking that is almost stereotypically Texan and a way of talking that is almost stereotypically standard, creating a very distinctive voice in the process. Ivins’ stereotypical Texas speech makes fun of stereotypical Texans, but it also identifies her as a Texan. She shifts in and out of her West Texas voice between clauses and within them, using it, sometimes in humor, sometimes for ironic criticism, to express her regional and individual identity. Shifts away from her Texas voice tend to be into very formal, elevated standard language that marks her as educated and cosmopolitan. Ivins’ voice is even more heterogeneous, however: she also expresses in her speech her rejection of another of the possible models for the action and speech of a white female Texan, that of the delicate, dependent Southern belle (the sort of woman you might be familiar with from Gone With the Wind). Ivins’ discourse allows us to examine the interplay of regional, national, and individual identities and the strategic use of regional identification for rhetorical ends.

In the excerpt we will examine (from Ivins 1991), Ivins describes a debate over a Texas redistricting bill. She writes that in 1971, State Representative Guy Floyd of San Antonio:

>a good ol’ boy who had been shafted by the bill, rose to remonstrate with the chairman of the Redistricting Committee.... Lookahere, Del-win, “said Floyd, much aggrieved, ,,look at this district here. You’ve got a great big ball at the one end, and then a little bitty ol’ strip a ‘land goes for about 300 miles, and then a great big ol’ ball at the other end. It looks like a dumbbell. Now the courts say the districts have to be com-pact and con-tiguous. Is that your idea a ‘com-pact and con-tiguous?“ Delwin Jones meditated at some length before replying, „Whaell, in a artistic sense, it is. “ (p. 15)

Ivins represents widely-held stereotypes of Texas speech here. She creates a laconic pace with the discourse markers wheell, lookahere, and now, at the beginnings of sentences and with the long pause she describes („Delwin Jones meditated at some length“). The nonstandard South Midland phonology that characterizes Texas speech is represented by „eye-dialect“ (ol, a) and the expressions great big ol’ and little bitty ol’, and South Midland morphophonology is represented by a artistic.

In framing the story, Ivins’ narratorial voice is sometimes depicted as using standard, even elevated, speech. However, even here Ivins shifts styles. For example, she begins the redistricting story with colloquial phrasing: „a good ol’ boy who had been shafted by the bill,” then switches to more formal diction in the verb phrase, „rose to remonstrate with the chairman of the Redistricting Committee“. She goes on to identify him as a man „much aggrieved“. Through formal lexical choices such as remonstrate and aggrieved, Ivins makes an implicit claim to the intellectual authority of outside observer and critic. Through phrasing such as „good ol’ boy“ she invokes and satirizes a regional stereotype, at the same time displaying her identity with it through her fluency in it.

What Molly Ivins calls „speaking Texan“ has a more personal function as well: displaying the public freedom of expression and forthrightness some-
times denied the traditional Southern woman. Through her linguistic choices, Ivins simultaneously asserts her toughness and her sense of play. Linguistic resources associated with region (the west) and gender (maleness) give Ivins a way of emphasizing her convictions; the resources of class and nation (standard English) give her a means of grounding her intellectual analysis. Together, Ivins’ choices from and juxtapositions of the resources available to her allow her to establish a clearly individual discourse style with which to express a clearly individual identity.

Two metaphors

Now that I’ve illustrated, I hope, what I mean by the „multicultural“ perspective on communication, let me end by talking briefly about two metaphors that have been used in connection with this way of thinking. Ben Rampton’s metaphor for one thing that can go on at communicative borders is „crossing“. This metaphor seems to me particularly apt for the ways people can/do occasionally and strategically borrow from other groups and people. Like „cross-dressing,” it suggests something that is at least a slight aberration. (Note that I’m not claiming that Rampton’s work presents „crossing“ as an aberration, just that the metaphor of crossing itself tends to suggest that.) Still, it’s a useful way of talking: people can cross boundaries, which is something we haven’t been very good at modelling until recently.

Crossing is also the metaphor used by anthropologist Dan Rose (1990) in his critique of „bureaucratic“ ethnography. Rose urges ethnographers to experiment not only with new forms of representation (new ways of writing ethnography) but with new ways of doing ethnography that explore boundaries and create „reversals“ via what Rose calls „ethnographic poetics“. Ethnography, he says, should be more like postcolonial literature. As Rose puts it:

An ethnographic poetics desires more, indeed nothing less than to inhabit a zone of contact (by crossing it again and again) which cannot be defined but must be explored, which can take its shape through ethnography, poetry, fiction, and the other arts (...). (p. 45)

Another metaphor for communication at boundaries is suggested by Gloria Anzaldúa, the author of Borderlands/La Frontera (1987). Anzaldúa is a writer (not a linguist but very savvy about language) who comes from „the valley“; the part of Texas that is on the Rio Grande border with Mexico. She calls herself a „Chicana“, one of many terms people like her choose among depending on what they want to stress (or not) about themselves at the moment. Here is her description of what goes on at the linguistic borderland:

For a people who are neither Spanish nor live in a country in which Spanish is the first language; for a people who live in a country in which English is the reigning tongue but who are not Anglo; for a people who cannot entirely identify with either standard (formal, Castillian) Spanish or standard English, what recourse is left to them but to create their own language? A language which they can connect their identity to, one capable of communicating the realities and values true to themselves – a language with terms that are neither espanol ni ingles, but both. We speak a patois, a forked tongue, a variation of two languages. (p. 55)

This suggests a scenario in which things are more routinely mixed, a landscape of bilingual signs, license plates from another state or country, houses and people that look as if they could be on the other side, people picking and choosing from among various ways of talking and being.

This metaphor seems apt in my part of the world, where it comes from, the borderlands between Anglo North America and Hispanic Central and South America. People are metaphorically as well as physically close to the border in Texas. Where I live, and maybe more and more everywhere, it seems to me important to study linguistic borderlands, because communication is, more and more, multicultural in addition to being cross-cultural or intercultural.

References


Thirdness: The Intercultural Stance

Claire Kramsch

Introduction

The notion of „communicative competence“ seems to have been now supplemented or even replaced in Europe by a type of language competence that takes into account differences in „culture“ among interlocutors from different language groups. Two adjectives are used to qualify this new type of competence: „intercultural“ usually refers to communication across national divides, „cross-cultural“ is used to characterize communication across race, class, gender, ethnicity lines. These two terms reflect a common concern with communication among people who may not share a common language nor a common history, place in society, attitudes and worldviews, and who may imagine the future differently. The switch of adjective and the phonological analogy between communicative competence and intercultural competence seem to suggest that the latter is but a variant, a necessary outcome of, or a more refined version of a general ability to communicate with other fellow human beings. But is that really the case? Do they both share the same theoretical underpinnings? what is the nature and scope, the objectives of intercultural competence?

I propose first to briefly review the relationship of communicative competence and intercultural competence. I then briefly outline a theoretical framework for exploring language competence across cultures. This framework is then used for analyzing a case study of an encounter between speakers from different cultures.

Communicative Competence Revisited

In the mind of Dell Hymes, the anthropologist who coined the term 30 years ago in 1966, communicative competence had a distinct flavor of both social and cultural relativity. From his study of various Indian cultures and as can be seen in his early model of an ethnography of speaking, Hymes knew well how problematic it was to study linguistic and cultural competence separately. He writes:

_The solution would be to take speech itself as an object of study, as having patterning of its own, requiring both linguistic and social analysis. It would_