

**Athens Institute for Education and Research**

**ATINER**



**ATINER's Conference Paper Series**

**MED2013-0549**

**Intercultural Communication and  
Modern Media Education**

**Alevtina A. Kolosova**  
**Associate Professor**  
**Mass Communication Department**  
**Peoples' Friendship University of Russia**  
**Russia**

**Natalia V. Poplavskaya**  
**Lecturer**  
**Mass Communication Department**  
**Peoples' Friendship University of Russia**  
**Russia**

Athens Institute for Education and Research  
8 Valaoritou Street, Kolonaki, 10671 Athens, Greece  
Tel: + 30 210 3634210 Fax: + 30 210 3634209  
Email: [info@atiner.gr](mailto:info@atiner.gr) URL: [www.atiner.gr](http://www.atiner.gr)  
URL Conference Papers Series: [www.atiner.gr/papers.htm](http://www.atiner.gr/papers.htm)

Printed in Athens, Greece by the Athens Institute for Education and Research.  
All rights reserved. Reproduction is allowed for non-commercial purposes if the  
source is fully acknowledged.

**ISSN 2241-2891**

19/09/2013

## An Introduction to ATINER's Conference Paper Series

ATINER started to publish this conference papers series in 2012. It includes only the papers submitted for publication after they were presented at one of the conferences organized by our Institute every year. The papers published in the series have not been refereed and are published as they were submitted by the author. The series serves two purposes. First, we want to disseminate the information as fast as possible. Second, by doing so, the authors can receive comments useful to revise their papers before they are considered for publication in one of ATINER's books, following our standard procedures of a blind review.

Dr. Gregory T. Papanikos  
President  
Athens Institute for Education and Research

This paper should be cited as follows:

**Kolossova, A.A. and Poplavskaya, N.V.** (2013) "**Intercultural Communication and Modern Media Education**" Athens: ATINER'S Conference Paper Series, No: MED2013-0549.

## **Intercultural Communication and Modern Media Education**

**Alevtina A. Kolosova**

**Associate Professor**

**Mass Communication Department  
Peoples' Friendship University of Russia  
Russia**

**Natalia V. Poplavskaya**

**Lecturer**

**Mass Communication Department  
Peoples' Friendship University of Russia  
Russia**

### **Abstract**

Today the mass media are directly involved in globalization process. The using of the Internet and other media, referred to as Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) plays an important role in spreading and exchanging information between cultures and nations. The new communication and information technologies bring new possibilities for developing media. With the advancements in technology and telecommunications, it became possible for the great amount of information to be transferred to the other end of the world in seconds, which made a huge impact on people's thinking, behavior and activities.

That is why the problems of multicultural understanding play an important role and the questions of teaching intercultural communication in the institutes and faculties of journalism take on special significance.

Through intercultural communication, future journalists can learn a tremendous amount about other peoples and cultures, and moreover, learning about others they can learn something new about themselves. Intercultural communication refers to both an academic and applied field of study. The course 'Intercultural communication' incorporates cross-cultural trainings of intercultural competence and cultural intelligence, tolerance and assertiveness, which can help the students to foresee communicative barriers, understand the causes of intercultural conflicts and adapt to different cultural settings.

What are the most popular methods of teaching intercultural communication to the students learning journalism – academic lectures or practical seminars?

According to the results of the poll which was carried out among the students the most effective method of teaching and learning intercultural communication is combination of academic lectures and seminars-trainings at which the participants come to understanding not only the values of other cultures, but to deeper awareness of their native cultures.

Nowadays development of basic components of intercultural communication such as intercultural competence and cultural intelligence is as important as development of media literacy and critical thinking.

**Key words:** intercultural communication, media education, media genres, globalization, intercultural competence, media literacy, cross-cultural skills, intercultural intelligence.

**Corresponding Author:**

*'It is impossible to think about the present or the future of universities without taking into account that universities live in a world dominated by mass media. If so, one must ask if and to what extent these old institutions called Universities are influenced by the various channels of mass communication. It is certainly possible to assume the opposite, and to wonder if and how the university can influence mass media' -*

*Umberto Eco*

It is no doubt that we live in the rapidly changing time. Globalization is one of the main buzzwords of the 21-st century.

Today the mass media are directly involved in the globalization process. The using of the Internet and other media, referred to as Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) plays an important role in spreading and exchanging information between cultures and nations. The new communication and information technologies bring new possibilities for developing media. With the advancements in technology and telecommunications, it became possible for the great amount of information to be transferred to the other end of the world in seconds, which made a huge impact on people's thinking, behavior and activities.

Media, especially radio and television, take a special place in communication system. Today media can transfer information, overcoming geographical, political and cultural boundaries. People from every corner of the world are closely connected with each other, and the world, according to Marshall McLuhan is turning into 'the global village' - a common information space without borders.

As one of the media scholars said (Russhkoff, 1996):

*'We live in an age when the values of data, images, and ideologies has surpassed that material acquisitions and physical territory. We have viewed the earth from space over national broadcast television. The only place left for our civilization to expand ... is the media. This new space is called the datasphere or 'media space'.*

In the modern world ways of distribution of information considerably changed. Satellites, television, radio, the Internet, and newspapers directly or indirectly quickly transfer information to people in different kinds of texts and data media (carriers) - audio, video or the written text.

The international media corporations seek to expand the influence in the most different spheres of mass communications, being engaged as in content sale (movies, music, video, books, program TV, etc.), and acting as provider and the distributor.

We are all constantly connected through media; there are uncountable angles to explore how it all affects our lives, society, behavior, relationships. *'Today, our cultural body is made of media'* (Rushkoff, 1996). One of the

consequences of globalization of information space became the intensity of intercultural communication and interaction.

That's why the problems of multicultural understanding play an important role and the questions of teaching intercultural communication in the institutes and faculties of journalism take on special significance. IC develops the students' cross-cultural skills and offers tools for solution challenging tasks of intercultural interaction and acting as successful players of the global media market.

The course on intercultural communication for the students of the journalism department faculty in Peoples' Friendship University of Russia is intended to present essential concepts of national and global culture, national and universal values, and major theories of intercultural communication. We believe that this course is crucial for all the professionals dealing with modern media and especially for students of Peoples' Friendship University of Russia because more than 9 thousand graduate and postgraduate students from 140 countries (about 450 nations and nationalities) are currently studying at PFUR.

The teaching methodology incorporates different approaches such as, psychological, critical, interpretive approaches, and the culture specific (emic, single culture) and cultural-general (etic, universal) approaches as well. Critical thinking, problem solving and making decisions teaching technologies are used as well.

The discipline is designed on the philosophy of synergetics, which gives the opportunity to realize the interdisciplinary approach to its learning and teaching. The detailed outline of the lectures topics are presented in the Table 1.

Intercultural communication refers to both an academic and applied field of study. It explores the questions of relationships and understanding between people from different countries and cultures, their behaviour, interaction and communication in diverse cultural settings.

*One of the practical aims of the course is to help students to adapt successfully to new surroundings, cultures and people.*

Modern teaching of intercultural communication in higher education Institution is carried out, as a rule, in three main forms: lectures, seminars and foreign languages classes. But we should mention that *in recent years the increasing attention from teachers of intercultural communication involves such active social and psychological method as intercultural training*. That's why, along with the traditional forms and methods of teaching - lectures and seminars - the course 'Intercultural communication' for students of journalism provides an active and interactive format of the training sessions which includes intercultural trainings, seminars and workshops, simulation games, intergroup dialogues, role playing, analysis of 'critical incidents' and 'cultural assimilator' as the methods of ethno-psychological and cross-cultural impact.



**Table 1. Intercultural Communication Course Outline**

№	Name of the Unit	Topics
1	Globalization and Intercultural Communication	<p><i>Topic 1. Introduction to intercultural communication.</i> Globalization and localization. The concept of Intercultural communication. History of intercultural communication. Intercultural communication as a scientific discipline.</p> <p><i>Topic 2. The concept of culture and communication in the globalized world.</i> Definitions of culture. The co-evolution of culture. Culture as a subject of academic study. Culture as a system. Models of culture. Culture and civilization. Cultural values. Universal and national values. Classification of values. The definitions and approaches to the concept of communication. Models of communications. Functions of communication.</p>
2	Theoretical aspects of intercultural communication	<p><i>Topic 3. Basic theories of intercultural communication.</i> Edward Hall's theory of high- and low-context cultures. Time and its perception in different cultures. G. Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions theory. R. Lewis' theory.</p>
3	Discourse in intercultural communication.	<p><i>Topic 4. Verbal and nonverbal communication.</i> <i>The concept of discourse.</i> 'Key words' and 'non-equivalent lexis'. Different forms of nonverbal communication: kinesics, tactilics, vocalic, proxemics, chronemics. Face expression, eye contact, symbolic meaning of colour. Prosodic. Intonation. P. Grice's and G. Leech's maxims.</p> <p><i>Topic 5. Media discourse.</i> Psychology of Media effect. Priming effect in media. Media literacy</p>
4	Psychological aspects of intercultural communication	<p><i>Topic 6. Psychology of intercultural communication.</i> The concepts of empathy and rapport. Cultural differences in perception, time orientation, personal space, decision making, and negotiations patterns. Intercultural conflict. The concept of assertiveness in intercultural communication.</p> <p><i>Topic 7. Intercultural competence and cultural intelligence.</i> Definitions, structure and models of intercultural competence and cultural intelligence in contemporary studies.</p> <p><i>Topic 8. Culture shock and its stages.</i> Problem of cultural adaptation. Intercultural transformation of personality.</p>
5	Intercultural communication and cross-cultural management.	<p><i>Topic 9. Concept of organizational culture.</i> Typology of organizational cultures. Levels of corporate culture. Different models of interaction in multicultural organizations. Cultural synergy and its role in intercultural communication. International business etiquette.</p>

The term 'intercultural' literally means 'between cultures' and so a fundamental question is how can 'culture' be defined and hence what is meant by 'intercultural communication'? There are many definitions of culture because it is a complex concept.

To deeper understand the concept 'culture' students are given the following task: *'present the culture of your country or ethnic group you belong to using metaphoric 'onion' model by G. Hofstede'*.

Nowadays the ability to communicate effectively with people from different nations and cultures has become a key ingredient for commercial and personal success.

The study of intercultural communication takes on special significance, because it develops the students' cross-cultural skills and offers tools for solution challenging problems.

With the aim to improve and make more effective teaching and learning intercultural communication process we put forward the following question: *'What are the most popular methods of teaching intercultural communication to the students learning journalism – academic lectures or practical seminars'?*

In order to get the exact answer to this question we asked the students to write a short essay on their impression of the course. In this kind of work more than 360 students took part, both Russian and foreign. According to the results of the poll which was carried out among the students the most effective method of teaching and learning intercultural communication is combination of academic lectures and seminar-trainings at which the participants come to understanding not only the values of other cultures, but to deeper awareness of their native cultures.

The success of intercultural communication in the field of media education depends on development of intercultural competence and cultural intelligence, which play important role in both intercultural interaction and researching and understanding media texts created in different cultural environment.

Basically *intercultural competence* can be defined as the ability to behave effectively and appropriately in interacting across cultures (Martin & Nakayama, 2010).

There are different approaches to learning, teaching and training intercultural competence. Summarizing all of them emphasizes the following components of intercultural competence:

- open-mindedness;
- non-judgementalness;
- empathy;
- tolerance for ambiguity;
- flexibility in thinking and behavior;
- self-awareness;
- knowledge of one's own and other cultures;
- resilience to stress;
- communication or message skills;
- synergy.

As we can see intercultural competence is a multi-faceted phenomenon, the components of which are often grouped into three categories: cognitive,

behavioral and affective, which are related to the outcomes of ICIC: *knowledge, skills and attitudes* (Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009).

The knowledge component of intercultural competence comprises various cognitive aspects of communication competence. Judith Martin and Thomas K. Nakayama notice: 'Perhaps most important is *self-knowledge* - knowing how you may be perceived as a communicator and what your strengths and weaknesses are' (Martin & Nakayama, 2010).

In the latest years, the new approaches to intercultural communication have been developed which are connected with the theories applied by researchers and academics in the fields of business, cross-cultural management, marketing, advertising. One of them is the cognitive approach, which comes from cognitive psychology. The scholars working in this sphere consider that it is the *cultural intelligence* that gives the main key to successful intercultural communication.

There are different models and definitions of cultural intelligence (CQ). Some scholars consider cultural intelligence as a set of interacting elements consisting of knowledge, skills and cultural metacognition and define CQ as *a system of interacting abilities*. 'Cultural intelligence, the capability to deal effectively with people from different cultural backgrounds, is a multifaceted competency consisting of cultural knowledge, the practice of mindfulness and a repertoire of cross-cultural skills. (Thomas & Inkson, 2009). The central position in Thomas's and his colleagues' conceptualization belongs to cultural metacognition. Cultural metacognition involves: (1) the ability to consciously and deliberately monitor one's knowledge processes and cognitive and affective states (metacognitive experiences) and (2) to regulate these processes and states in relation to an objective (metacognitive strategies) (Thomas and others, 2008).

Based on conceptual and empirical methods Thomas and his colleagues settle the following skill sets:

- perceptual (*open-mindedness, tolerance of uncertainty, and non-judgementalness*);
- relational (*flexibility, sociability, empathy*);
- adaptive (the ability to generate appropriate behavior in a new cultural setting, (the skill that perhaps most clearly distinguishes cultural intelligence from other related ideas), self-monitoring, behavioral flexibility and self-regulation);
- analytic (cultural metacognition) (Thomas and others, 2008).

So as we can see from this description of cross-cultural skills the factors included in perceptual and relational skills are similar to some components of intercultural competence: open-mindedness, tolerance of uncertainty, non-judgementalness, flexibility, sociability, empathy. Such components of intercultural competence as knowledge of one's own and other cultures and self-awareness coincide with cultural knowledge component of CQ. The

difference between ICIC components and components of CQ is the metacognitive aspect. Indicators of cultural intelligence are:

- Good personal adjustment;
- Good interpersonal relationships with culturally different others;
- Completion of task-related goals (Thomas and others, 2008).

This metacognitive aspect of cultural intelligence is an integral part of other CQ models.

We cannot help mentioning that CQ becomes a critical component of everybody's life. It opens new experiences allowing to transform cultural differences into possibilities for learning, personal growth, and relationships.

The components of intercultural competence and cultural intelligence can be developed by learning and teaching in different ways: intercultural training, coaching, theoretical courses, and seminars. It can be done through university education and the professional development.

*What knowledge should people possess to create, share and understand media texts?* - Media studies, mass communication, communication studies, and journalism studies students should certainly get knowledge on *Media Linguistics, Media Psychology* and *Media Literacy*.

Mass media's potential to influence audience beliefs, attitudes and behavior is a subject that has long fascinated scholars. The authors of the books, published on the new directions in media researches – *media psychology*, emphasize that ‘The foundation of this new branch of psychology comes from a variety of fields including sociology, technology, media and communications studies, and psychology’ (Fremlin, 2008).

As one of the modern scholars James Potter noted, ‘the challenge is no longer how to get information but how to protect oneself from the flood of messages that aggressively compete for an individual’s attention’. (Potter, 2004)

In media education, it is interesting to look at the texts of mass media from the point of view intercultural communication and interaction.

It is well known that in media education and in some other humanitarian fields the issue of terminology is very important because in order to understand each other we should come to some kind of consensus in this area. Even the definitions of the word ‘journalism’ are different in various countries. As far as the research and discussion of media texts and media genres are concerned it should be mentioned that it is an urgent issue for research in the field of modern journalism. Scholars from different countries who make investigations in media discourse and media linguistics pay great and special attention to these questions (Dobrosklonskaya, 2005).

In spite of the fact that it is very much written about styles and genres of texts of mass communication, and the majority of researchers believe that language of media represents separate functional style, it should be noted that research of texts of mass communication from the point of view of functional

and style features and genres, has certain difficulties caused by a variety of reasons.

One of them consists in multilevel structure of the media text, especially television: verbal language, sound row, video image.

The second point is in increasing prevalence of diffusion of styles of media texts, interpenetration, mixture of a literature and spoken language. So, for example, many CNN and Fox News programs are often submitted in style of information entertainment programs, so-called 'infotainment'. For example, the author's program *O'Reyli's Factor* of the known American journalist, political analyst, anchorman Bill O'Reyli on Fox News TV channel and the show programs of Glenn Bek on the CNN channel.

The third reason of difficulty of detection of genre and style specifics of the media text is in collective authorship of the materials presented in mass media, mainly having news character.

The fourth reason of difficulty of the style and genre analysis of media texts consists in a terminological disparate, ambiguity of the terms used for the description of styles and genres. In different language systems there are various approaches, concepts and criteria for definition of genres and styles of media texts.

There are different classifications and systems of genres presenting in different scientific directions depending on the question in which countries and more over even in which cities one or another media research is held.

As a rule, genres existing in British and USA mass media can be united in the following types: news, comments, features and advertising (Dobrosklonskaya, 2005). They can be subdivided into news reporting, lifestyle shows, chat show interviews, reality TV, sporting events etc. In Russia there is another classification for the translation of which there is no direct correlation.

In our practice, we came across to the problem, that some students have no idea of the concept 'genre' at all. That is why it is very important to include in the program on media education the courses on media discourse and media psychology. One of the consequences of globalization of information space became the intensity of intercultural communication and interaction. Influence of cultural communication on studying and research media genres is an urgent issue for research in the field of modern journalism because in order to understand each other we should come to some kind of consensus concerning the genres definitions.

## **Conclusion**

The need of intercultural communication is indispensable in the globalized world.

Through intercultural communication, future journalists can learn a tremendous amount about other peoples and cultures, and moreover, learning about others they can learn something new about themselves.

Cross-cultural trainings of intercultural competence and cultural intelligence, tolerance and assertiveness incorporated in the course can help the students to foresee communicative barriers, understand the causes of intercultural conflicts and adapt to different cultural settings.

The discipline provides students with tools needed to think about intercultural communication, as a way of understanding the challenges and recognizing the advantages of living in a multicultural world.

This course offers a broad overview of the notion culture and brings about the understanding and appreciation of diversity within a domestic and international context. The course is intended to serve as an opportunity for learners to gain new theoretical knowledge in intercultural communication and explore personal values and attitudes relative to their professional development.

The discipline introduces a way of thinking that will enable future specialists to function effectively in any culture. It presents essential concepts of national and global culture and examines key differences in communication, facilitating the correct interpretation of a wide variety of cross-cultural situations and laying the foundation for necessary behavioral adaptations. Other important topics include intercultural conflict management, intercultural competence, cultural shock and others.

As the most components of intercultural competence and cultural intelligence coincide, they can be developed through different combined methods: academic courses, trainings, coaching with active applying such well recommended intercultural methods as 'cultural incident', 'culture assimilator' and others.

Cultural intelligence is not specific to a particular culture. It provides a person with the capability to function effectively in culturally diverse situations.

The course 'Intercultural Communication' puts a strong emphasis on practical applications in real professional situations.

## **Bibliography**

- Dobrosklonskaya, T. G. (2005). *Problems of media text research. (Practice of analysing English modern media speech)*. Moscow: URSS Editorial. [In Russian].
- Fairclough, N. (2006). *Media Discourse Language and Globalization*. London: Routledge
- Fremlin, J.W. 'Understanding Media Psychology'. *Observer*. Available at <http://www.psychologicalscience.org/index.php/publications/observer/2008/january-08/understanding-media-psychology.html> [25 December 2012].
- Machin, D. & Van Leeuwen, T. (2007). *Global Media discourse: A Critical Introduction*. London: Routledge.
- Martin, J.N. & Nakayama, T.K. (2010) *Intercultural Communication in Context. Fifth edition*. N.Y.: McGraw-Hill.

- Mattheson D. (2005). *Media Discourses: Analysing Media Texts. Issues in Cultural and Media Studies*. N. Y.: Open University Press.
- Potter, W. J (2004). *Theory of Media Literacy: A cognitive approach*. Thousand Oaks, Calif: SAGE Publications.
- Rushkoff, D. (1996). *Media Virus! Hidden Agendas in Popular Culture*. N.Y.: Ballantine Books.
- Spencer-Oatey, H. & Franklin, P. (2009). *Intercultural Interaction: A Multidisciplinary Approach to Intercultural Communication*. L.: Palgrave McMillan.
- Teun, A. van Dijk. *The Mass Media Today: Discourses of Domination or Diversity?* Available at [http://www.discourses.org/OldArticles/The mass media today.pdf](http://www.discourses.org/OldArticles/The%20mass%20media%20today.pdf) [5 February 2013]
- Thomas, D. and others. (2008). 'Cultural intelligence: domain and assessment'. *International journal of Cross-cultural management*. Vol.8 (2): 123-143.
- Thomas, D. & Inkson, K. (2009). *Cultural Intelligence: Living and Working Globally*. San-Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers.
- Thornborrow, J. (2011). *Media discourse Continuum*. International Publishing Group.