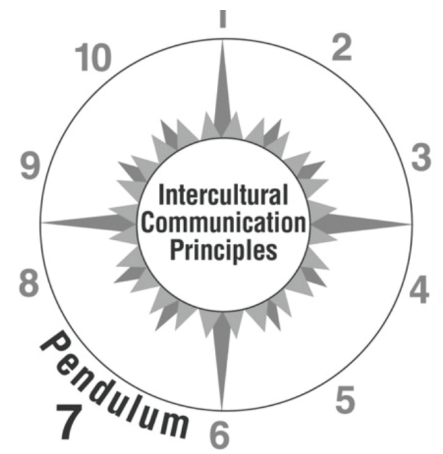


7 Pendulum Principle

'Panta Rhei'



Key Theme: Tension

Problem Question: If change is the driving force behind intercultural communication, what drives the change itself?

Objective: To help you understand the contradictory nature of intercultural communication

Key Concepts: Bilingual education, change, colonialism, contradiction, convergence, dialectics, divergence, needs, ethnolinguistic vitality, 'linguistic imperialism,' 'linguistic landscape,' motivation, objective ethnolinguistic vitality, polyphony, praxis, phronesis, subjective ethnolinguistic vitality, 'voice.'

Chapter Outline

- 1 Introducing the Problem Question 158
- 2 Tensions in Intercultural Communication 158
 - 2.1 Ethnolinguistic Vitality 161
- 3 'Voice' in Intercultural Communication 162
- 4 Introducing the Pendulum Principle 164
 - 4.1 The Contradictory Nature of Intercultural Communication 164
 - 4.2 Intercultural Communication as Praxis 169
 - 4.3 Intercultural Communication and Change 170
- 5 The Pendulum Principle Defined 172
- 6 Case Study: 'Dialectics of Colonial Encounter: Interacting with the Kobon' 173
- 7 Side Trips 176
 - 7.1 Speaking Spanish at a Border 176
 - 7.2 Linguistic Landscapes and Cultural Transformations 177
 - 7.3 In Montreal, a Berlin Wall of the Mind? 177

1 Introducing the Problem Question

In the previous chapter, we saw how people from different cultures create a shared space that constantly changes yet remains stable. It is possible to say that intercultural communication is driven by change. But, why exactly do cultures change?

In this chapter, thus, we take up the following Problem Question: ‘If change is the driving force behind of intercultural communication, what drives the change itself?’

2 Tensions in Intercultural Communication

The expression in the subtitle of the chapter—*Panta Rhei*—belongs to Heraclitus (500 BC) and means ‘All things are in constant flux.’ This chapter, more than any other, is about the dynamic nature of intercultural interactions. In this chapter, you may be especially tempted to reach for firm ground—only to discover that the way to keep it under your feet is to keep moving.

We begin by looking at three examples of intercultural interactions. As you read the descriptions below, try to think what these situations have in common.

The first example presents the following situation of a Thai manager working in an American subsidiary in Thailand:

At New Year’s, Thais give presents to customers, but this organization can’t. They say it is illegal. If they do give things, they buy one thing in bulk and give it to everybody. In Thai culture, the gifts need to reflect the relationship or the amount of business.

(Mattson & Stage, 2001)

How should this manager with a traditional Thai background interact with his American co-workers who expect gifts to be given in bulk and his clients who expect specialized gifts?

The next example describes what happened between the white inhabitants of Snow Low, AZ, and the members of the White Mountain Apache tribe living in the same area (see: ‘Fire arrest increases race tensions,’ 2002). One of the members of the Apache tribe was arrested and charged with starting a fire that grew into the largest fire in Arizona’s history. As a result, the Native Americans began to keep to themselves, fearing retribution, while among the white communities the feeling of resentment was high. Should the Apaches stop going to their favorite bars and dancing halls, and should members of the white communities stop welcoming those of the White Mountain Apache tribe?

The last example is the interactions between two main ethnic cultures in Fiji—the indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijians (de Vries, 2002). Fiji is a South Pacific country split into two main cultural groups—the native population and those of Indian descent. These two ethnic groups have different

positions on most issues, such as the land. The indigenous Fijians own most of the land and feel a strong attachment to it, while most of the economic activity is carried out by the Indo-Fijians. At the same time, many long-term land leases for Indo-Fijians are expiring. It is no surprise that the land issue is a very emotionally charged one on the country's agenda. How can the issue of the land proprietorship and use be handled?

These three scenarios have at least three things in common.

First, in each situation, a certain tension exists between the interacting cultures. In the first case, the situation is only somewhat tenuous, putting the manager between the expectations of the organizational and host cultures. In the second case, the tensions between the white communities and the Apache are quite high and may easily turn into violence. And, in the third case, the situation is truly explosive; the tensions between the indigenous Fijians and the Indo-Fijians may result in a coup and overthrowing the government—something that has already happened in the past.

Second, as a result of tensions, the people from all interacting cultures face a choice. You may have noticed that we ended the description of each scenario with a question; these questions present the choices that must be made. In the first case, does the manager go with the bulk gifts, possibly losing some clients, or with the specialized gifts, possibly alienating himself in the organization? And, how should the company deal with this manager? In the second case, should the members of the Apache culture stop going to their favorite bars and dancing halls, and should the white communities lash back at them? In the third case, should the Indigenous Fijians allow the Indo-Fijians to use their land and, if so, on what conditions? Also, should the Indo-Fijians take to arms or perhaps leave the country if not allowed to renew the lease on their land?

Third, each situation calls for some action. The need for action varies, of course, with each scenario; in the first case, it is not as pressing as in the second, and, especially, in the third case. However, something in all these situations must change; otherwise the tensions will keep growing and things may get out of control.

Why do tensions arise between cultures, in the first place? Why do people constantly find themselves facing choices—some small, and some quite significant? A preliminary answer to these questions can be found in Chapter 4: people from different cultures have different positions on the same issue. But why? For instance, why does the Thai manager in the example above want to give his clients specialized gifts, while the American company that he works for has a different position—to buy one thing in bulk and give it to everybody?

To understand why this happens, we must differentiate between positions as explicit claims that people make, and needs as innermost strivings underlying cultural behaviors. Positions can be equated with a stance taken on a certain issue, emphasizing what people want in a certain situation, such as buying gifts in bulk and giving them to clients. **Needs** are

inner strivings, emphasizing why people want it, such as for the purpose of avoiding preferential treatment and possible lawsuits over the matter. It is needs that motivate people to behave in a certain way and take a particular position. Needs give rise to tensions, motivating people to overcome those tensions and reach their goal. The term '**motivation**' is derived from the Latin 'movere,' meaning 'to move.' People from different cultures can satisfy their needs only if they 'move,' i.e., keep doing something.

There are many theories that try to explain and classify human needs. One of the best-known theories was developed by Abraham Maslow, a well-known American psychologist, and takes on the form of a hierarchy of needs (1954). According to this theory, five types of needs influence human behavior: physiological (e.g., oxygen, food), safety (e.g., avoiding harm and disease), love (affection of others), esteem (respect of others), and self-actualization (desire to reach whatever goal we may have). These five types of needs form a hierarchy because we cannot be motivated to satisfy higher level needs unless the lower level needs have been satisfied first.

When people from different cultures come into contact, tensions arise because their needs are different. For instance, the Indigenous Fijians in the example above feel a strong attachment to the land (love needs), while the Indo-Fijians want to use it for their economic projects (self-actualization needs). The twist here is that the tension is created by people from both cultures who exist on the same land and so the land issue is their common space. In the previous chapter, we saw that continuum can be represented as a line formed by two cultures and turned into a circle. It may look flat and static, but in reality it is not: it ceases to be flat the moment we give the edges a half-twist. This shared space then comes to life and appears as a dynamic infinity sign (spiral) with the tension existing between the two parts (Figure 7.1).

Intercultural communication, therefore, is driven by tensions that arise from different cultural needs. Tensions create potential for **change** and allow people from different cultures to reach their goals. Zero tension means no potential for change—and no communication.

Now we know that what makes the world go round is tensions resulting from different cultural needs, ranging from basic physiological drives to complex desires of self-actualization. Overall, it is no exaggeration to say that

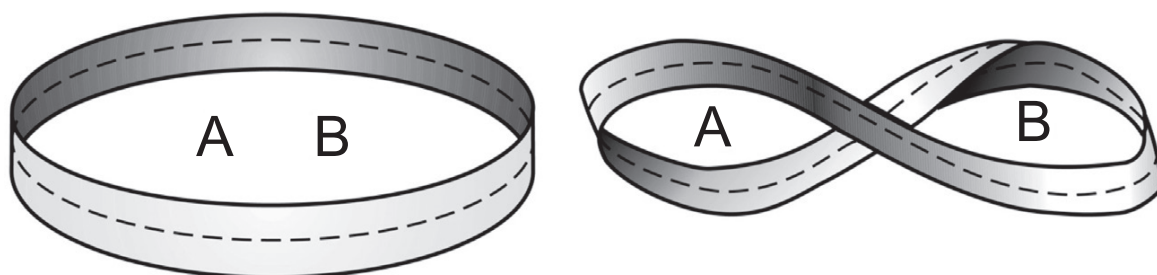


Figure 7.1 Continuum as dynamic tension *Source: Author*

the overriding motivation of any group of people is to maintain its cultural vitality, i.e., the capacity for the continuation of a meaningful existence.

2.1 *Ethnolinguistic Vitality*

The concept of vitality as it applies to culture was introduced by Howard Giles in the form of Vitality Theory (Bouhris et al., 2019; Giles & Johnson, 1987). This theory aims to provide an assessment of a culture's strength (vitality) by focusing on certain aspects—usually, on language as the main means of cultural expression. A culture's strength is investigated using the concept of **ethnolinguistic vitality**, i.e., the extent to which a culture can function as a collective entity due to the range and importance of its language usage. In this light, “a language group with high vitality is more likely to survive and flourish as a collective entity in an intergroup context. By contrast, groups with low vitality are likely to disappear as discrete linguistic entities in intergroup settings” (Barker et al., 2001, p. 6).

Two types of ethnolinguistic vitality are isolated—objective and subjective (Giles et al., 1977). **Objective ethnolinguistic vitality** is identified with a culture's position based on available ‘hard’ data such as demographics, e.g., a number of people speaking a certain language. **Subjective ethnolinguistic vitality** is identified with a culture's position as perceived by its members. When members of a culture “sense that their vitality is low, or when another language group threatens it, group members may feel their social identity to be negatively valued and act to change their situation” (Barker et al., 2001, p. 7). Therefore, ethnolinguistic vitality is a matter of comparison: it can be determined and changed only in the process of intercultural interactions.

Earlier, we saw how tensions can arise between people from different cultures on such issues as giving gifts or using land. Now we can see that language itself may become a focal point for disagreement, creating tensions between cultures. In many cases, language usage is an explosive issue as people fight ferocious battles across cultural barricades. Below are several examples of such battles.

In Latvia, a former Soviet republic, language policies are a reaction to the use of Russian as its official language from 1940, when the country was annexed by the Soviet Union, to 1991, when the Soviet Union ceased to exist. With the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Latvia began reasserting its cultural identity, and the first steps in that direction were aimed at increasing its ethnolinguistic vitality. Latvian-only signs went up, everyone from doctors to bus drivers was required to speak enough Latvian to do their jobs, etc. A recent law adopted by the parliament of Latvia in 2018 provides for a gradual transition to education only in the Latvian language at the secondary school level in schools of national minorities. The language factor accelerated emigration from Latvia (Hazans, 2019); many Russians, though, still live in Latvia and use Russian as their main language. Naturally, the Russian-speaking minority population of Latvia find recent language policies of the Latvian government too aggressive or even biased (Semenov, 2018). Tensions between people from these two cultures (Latvian and Russian) are high, and the language struggle continues.

Another well-known example is the negative attitude of people from many cultures toward the use of English; its global spread is sometimes labeled ‘**linguistic imperialism**’ (Phillipson, 1992). Many people try to strengthen their culture by promoting their own language(s) and discouraging the use of Anglicisms. France and Switzerland, for instance, provide a special vocabulary aimed to replace Anglicisms with their own language(s), especially in the areas of computing, business, and entertainment. Instead of ‘spam,’ for example, the Swiss are encouraged to use ‘courier de masse non sollicité’ (‘unsolicited bulk mail’), while the French are urged to replace ‘public speaking’ with ‘l’art oratoire.’

And yet, according to Robert Phillipson whose two books—*Linguistic imperialism* (1992) and *Linguistic imperialism continued* (2010)—are considered to be the benchmark volumes on the subject, such attempts haven’t been very successful. He talks about ‘the linguistic imperialism of neoliberal empire,’ showing how the dominance of global English is now driven by corporations through new forms of communication, such as computer games, email and Internet interaction, SMSs, television programs, and advertising for the younger generation (Phillipson, 2008).

To overcome tensions, people from different cultures must voice their positions; in other words, they must express themselves as best as they can, making sure their voices are heard. High ethnolinguistic vitality can be equated with a strong cultural voice, and low ethnolinguistic vitality with a weak cultural voice.

3 ‘Voice’ in Intercultural Communication

We usually identify voice with sounds produced by our vocal organs. ‘**Voice**,’ though, is also a powerful cultural category (Evans, 2008) similar to that of ‘standpoint,’ discussed in chapter 4. While Standpoint Theory focuses on our cultural background that influences the way we perceive and know the world, ‘voice’ focuses more on how that is expressed; in other words, it “embodies who can speak, when, and in what ways” (Putnam, 2001, p. 41). A culture’s ‘voice’ can be expressed visually, for instance, through the so-called ‘**linguistic landscape**’—“the language of public signs and symbols, billboards, street names, mail advertising, government information, and notifications” (Barker et al., 2001, p. 8). One quick look reveals the diversity of linguistic landscapes of multilingual cultures in such domains as business and entertainment. Linguistic landscape is often an arena of contestation since different ‘voices’ are produced and propagated through language policy, language politics, and language hierarchies (Figure 7.2).

Two interpretations of voice (literal and figurative) are similar: both show how we identify people by their voice/‘voice’, whether it is an individual person or a culture. In other words, there can be no identity and no recognition (including self-recognition) without a voice. The concept of ‘voice’ is used widely in the study and practice of intercultural communication. For example, we find it in *Indian Voices*—a monthly publication to pay homage



Figure 7.2 Example of linguistic landscape Source: Public Domain

to Native Americans and promote harmony among the indigenous peoples of the world. Also, we find articles and books showing how difficult yet critical it is to study Native American culture because its voice mostly exists only in oral narratives (LeGrand, 1997).

The concept of ‘voice’ is often found in relation to people whose cultural positions are marginalized, not well-known or not known at all, calling our attention to “unique perspectives that are often ignored, silenced, or misunderstood” (Putnam, 2001, p. 41; see also: Gonzalez et al., 2015). For example, do we know much about the views of Australian Indigenous culture on music (Dennis, 2003), or the position of non-Western cultures on bioethics (Alora & Lumitao, 2002)? Such unique cultural voices were often ignored or silenced as a result of **colonialism**—a policy by which one culture maintains or extends its control over other cultures that depend upon it. Colonialism allowed powerful cultures like Britain to establish their control over other groups, such as cultures of Oceania. In this respect, “the academic field of intercultural communication cannot escape its links to colonialism” (Irwin, 1996, p. 25).

Today, many cultural voices are still silenced or misunderstood. From a Western point of view, many parts of the world are in effect excluded from genuine intercultural interactions, e.g.:

We can travel and see them. They cannot travel and see us. They may watch our soaps; we don't see their films. We "see," by and large, only Third World disasters, hunger, and corruption. They mainly see our success stories, the political leadership, the multinationals, the American way.
(Oonk, 2002, p. 535)

People from many cultures, therefore, do not hear other voices, or do not hear all the voices; for instance, the experience of people in the so-called 'Third World' cultures cannot be limited to hunger and disasters, while the experience of people in the Western cultures cannot be limited only to soap operas and business corporations.

The concept of 'voice' is central in the Theory of the Dialogical Self (Holquist, 1990). According to this theory, everything we say exists only as it relates to something said by someone else (Other); our voice exists only in a dialogue with other voices. The meaning of the word 'dialogue' is made up of two concepts: 'dia-' ('one with another') and 'legein' ('to talk'). Whether we support or criticize someone, we 'dialogue' with another position. Our voice, while certainly ours, at the same time embodies someone else's voice. Other enters into our speech not simply as an audience, but as part of our voice and part of our culture. In this sense, our interactions are characterized by **polyphony** or multivoicedness (Bakhtin, 1984). It is impossible to understand intercultural communication without acknowledging its inherent polyphonic nature—the existence of multiple cultural voices and open communication among them (Gao, 2016).

4 Introducing the Pendulum Principle

Let's now formulate, based on the discussion above, the seventh principle of intercultural communication—the Pendulum Principle. We will isolate three parts that make up this principle. Each part dealing with the dynamic nature of intercultural interactions. First, we will look at the contradictory nature of intercultural communication; then, we will discuss intercultural interactions in terms of praxis; finally, we will emphasize the role of change in intercultural communication. We will discuss each part separately and then formulate the Pendulum Principle, as a whole.

4.1 *The Contradictory Nature of Intercultural Communication*

The term '**contradiction**' is often interpreted as something negative. However, as we saw in the previous chapter, every meaning presupposes the existence of something contrary to it; for example, individualism is contrary, yet

linked, to collectivism. In this view, our life is nothing but contradictions—an interplay between opposing tendencies. This view of an interplay between unified oppositions is part of the Dialectical Theory of intercultural communication, emphasizing its contradictory and dynamic character (Drzewiecka & Nakayma, 2018; Martin, 2017). The word ‘**dialectics**’ as the art of discussion or debate has its roots in Ancient Greece when Socrates and Plato showed that every issue has two opposing lines of argument, regarding dialectics as a search for truth. Through discussion or debate, contradictory arguments can be resolved and the truth can be found.

So, everything is driven by contradictions, and intercultural communication is no exception. Take another look at the examples of interactions discussed earlier in this chapter. In each case, oppositions form an interactive unity. Unified oppositions are never static; the contradictory nature of intercultural communication lies in the ongoing interplay of opposing forces. If an opposing force is taken as a static and isolated object, we cannot say that intercultural communication really takes place in the dialectic sense of the word. Recall the examples of ethnocentric reduction and ethnocentric negation from Chapter 4; in both cases, there is no true interaction. In the first case, people from one culture treat another culture as an object, reducing it to itself, while, in the second case, people from one culture simply ignore another culture. It is as if people from these cultures exist in two parallel worlds that do not cross; here, we deal with dualism, but not dialectics. The nature of intercultural communication is contradictory (dialectical) in the sense that there is an ongoing interplay between opposing forces, allowing people from cultures to debate an issue and reach common ground.

It is the interplay between contradictory yet unified oppositions that is the driving force of intercultural communication. In this dynamic interplay, tensions are constantly created and overcome. The dialectics of tension presupposes both stretching out and drawing in. If a culture stretches too far, failing to draw in and remain itself, it breaks—and tension ceases to exist; if a culture stays in and refuses to stretch out, no tension arises—and no interaction takes place. Tension exists only insofar as something stretches out and draws in at the same time.

Let’s discuss the contradictory nature of intercultural communication by looking at the issue of **bilingual education** in the United States. Nearly everyone has an opinion on whether children with no or little fluency in English should be taught in schools in their own language while learning English. Supporters of bilingual education argue that it not only helps different groups to maintain their culture but also allows their stronger integration in the mainstream culture of the United States, seeing bilingual education as unifying rather than alienating. Supporters of the English-only movement, in their turn, argue that bilingual education (along with other bilingual policies) undermines the national unity, resulting in linguistic separation of the country. The issue of bilingual education is a major language battleground in the United States: “The official language debate continues to be a divisive

issue in the United States” (Sullivan & Schatz, 1999, p. 261); “In the United States bilingual education continues to provoke fierce debate” (Goldenberg & Wagner, 2015, p. 28).

In 1998, Proposition 227—an anti-bilingual education measure—was put forward in California where about 700,000 children had been taught entirely or partly in their first language (mostly Spanish). According to that Proposition, nearly all language classes taught in languages besides English were to be outlawed and replaced with an English-language class lasting one school year. Under Proposition 227, bilingual classes were to be prohibited for children under the age of ten unless parents of 20 students in the same grade made a request in person each year. Proposition 227 was to let parents sue any teacher who violates its English-only provisions. Districts failing to comply were to be fined about \$175 per pupil, with that money given to districts that do comply. The passage of Proposition 227 was to distribute \$61 million of federal bilingual education money to California. This, of course, is not the complete description of Proposition 227, but it does give you a good idea of its thrust. Now, how would you vote if you went to the ballot box—for or against the proposition? For the sake of the example, suppose 70% voted for the proposition, and 30% voted against it. These ballots represent two cultural positions—position A (Anglo-Saxon) and position B (bilingual—mostly Hispanic). Of course, not all white Anglo-Saxon people voted for the proposition, and not all Hispanic people voted against it; ‘Anglo-Saxon’ and ‘Hispanic’ are simply the labels for two cultural positions. It is easy to see how one position is stronger than the other, i.e., how Anglo-Saxon ethnolinguistic vitality is higher than bilingual ethnolinguistic vitality. In reality, the anti-bilingual education measure Proposition 227 won overwhelmingly in California (Asimov, 1998).

As we saw in the previous chapter, when people from different cultures are brought together by a certain issue (in this case, Bilingual Education Measure 227), their interactions form a shared continuous space. In this case, people who support this proposition and those who are against it are two contradictory forces. The voices of these two groups are clearly divergent; each one pulls out and away from the other one, trying to draw in as many votes as it can. **Divergence** is an act of moving in different directions from a common point; in our case, the common point is the issue of the bilingual education measure. These two groups take up the issue of the bilingual education measure and pull it out in different directions (Figure 7.3.).

As people in each group ‘grab’ the issue of the bilingual education measure and draw the votes toward themselves, trying to remain separate, the action of people from the other group provides the opposite movement—that of pulling back. This movement can be seen as a counterpoint for divergence of the two groups, making them move toward each other and converge. **Convergence**, then, is an act of approaching the same point from different directions (Figure 7.4).

The actions of divergence and convergence, discussed as separate actions, are, in fact, two sides of one and the same process, taking place simultaneously.

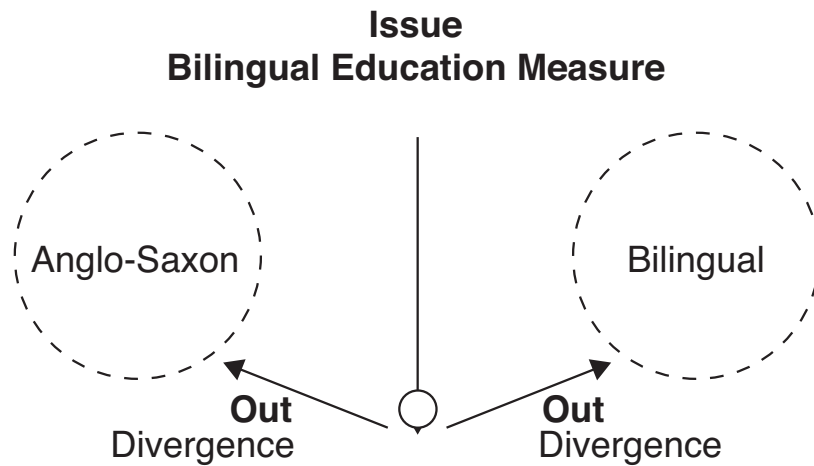


Figure 7.3 Intercultural communication as divergence *Source: Author*

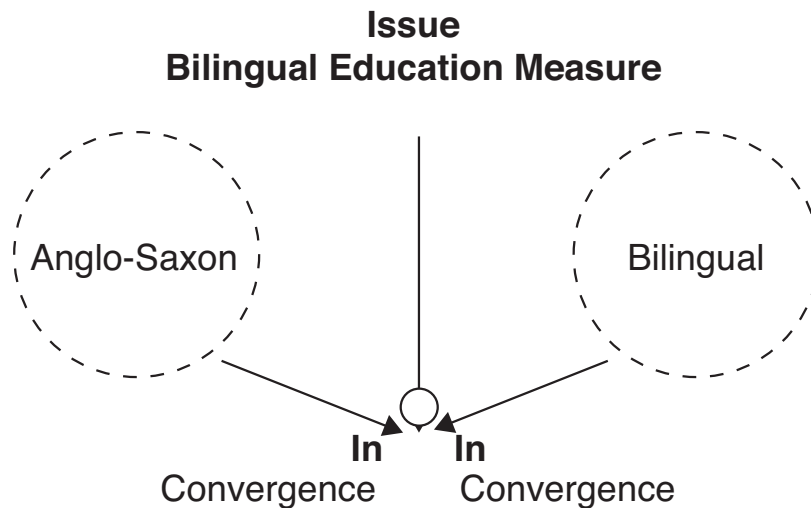


Figure 7.4 Intercultural communication as convergence *Source: Author*

The interaction between people from these two groups is but one movement that simultaneously connects them and keeps them apart. It is but one movement of a pendulum, representing an issue being discussed at the moment (in our example—the issue of Bilingual Education Measure 227). Because the voice of those who support the proposition is stronger at the moment (70% of the vote), the pendulum of intercultural communication is swinging in that direction (Figure 7.5).

Following the approval of Proposition 227, many bilingual teachers said they would not comply with the English-only rule, despite the threat of lawsuits; they vowed to go to court and fight the measure. It is perhaps due to their efforts, among other things, that the pendulum has recently swung in the opposite direction, i.e., toward bilingual education. In 2016, Proposition 58 was placed on the ballot by the state legislature and approved by voters with a 73.5% majority. Proposition 58 in effect repealed the provisions

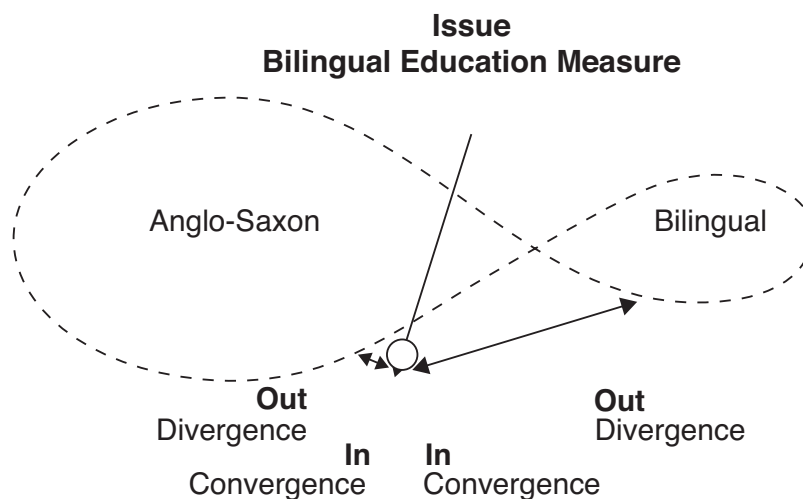


Figure 7.5 Intercultural communication as simultaneous divergence and convergence
Source: Author

required by Proposition 227 of 1998. Proposition 58 no longer requires English-only education for English learners and allows schools to utilize multiple programs, including bilingual education, making it possible for students to learn from teachers who speak both their native language and English (California Proposition 58, Non-English Languages Allowed in Public Education, 2016; Hopkinson, 2017).

The Pendulum Principle extends the ideas of the Continuum Principle because what is “normally depicted in a linear model along an arrow moving from left to right, can instead be mapped onto a pendulum” (Acheson & Schneider-Bean, 2019, p. 50). A pendulum can be conceptualized as constantly swinging, e.g., from discrimination to empathy, if we look at the attitudes toward the Other, discussed in Chapter 6, or from supporting the English-only measure to supporting the Multilingual Education measure, as just discussed. In both cases, the pendulum swings between a focus on similarity and a focus on difference, striving for a dynamic balance between the extreme positions of overdivergence and overconvergence. Overdivergence means cultural isolation and no dialogue between people from different cultures, while overconvergence means complete submersion of one (weaker) culture by another (stronger) culture. In both cases, the pendulum of intercultural communication would stop because there is no Other to provide a countermovement.

So, the contradictory nature of intercultural communication can be revealed by using dialectics as a “sensible way to study a world composed of mutually dependent processes in constant evolution” (Ollman, 1998, p. 342). This way, we can see that a culture maintains its identity and remains stable only through a process of interaction with other cultures. There is only one constant in this process, and that is flux understood as a pendulum movement.

It is important to emphasize that these two processes—centrifugal force of difference and centripetal force of unity—take place at the same time: intercultural communication, therefore, is a simultaneous process of difference and unity, a dynamic condition of coming to be and ceasing to be—at the same time. Or, as stated by one of the articles on intercultural communication, “To be and not to be, that is the answer” (*The Economist*, Vol. 341, 1996, pp. 91–92).

4.2 Intercultural Communication as Praxis

In Chapter 4, we saw how intercultural communication is performed. When people enact meaning, they must decide how to deal with various tensions, such as the needs for connection and autonomy, expression and privacy, or predictability and novelty (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). Intercultural communication, therefore, must be viewed as a form of **praxis**—purposive action based on one’s experience and tensions of the moment.

Praxis, which concerns itself with knowledge about human action, has a moral dimension: it requires practical wisdom (**phronesis**) to determine in a specific situation what is good for the individual and the culture(s), overall. One must be able to anticipate the consequences of one’s actions or—to use the metaphor from this chapter—to see what a change in the pendulum movement may entail. For example, one study that compared perceptions of change in Eastern and Western thinking patterns (Ji et al., 2001), found that Chinese were more likely to predict change in events than Americans. Also, Chinese were found to anticipate more alteration in the direction of trends and more variation in the rate of change, and were more likely than Americans to regard people who predict changes as wise. Successful intercultural communication requires that people from every culture listen to others’ voices, predicting change; this way, they can make wiser decisions about how to act in this or that situation. Overall, intercultural communication is successful “when we act jointly and our actions are part of a larger undertaking” (Kratochwil, 2018, p. 430). It is very important to keep in mind that people manage dialectical tensions in their intercultural interactions “through their jointly enacted communication choices” (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996, p. 14).

Another important aspect of praxis is that it deals with variable cases and requires experience relevant to specific situations (Flyvbjerg, 2001, p. 57). The pendulum of intercultural communication does not swing by itself; it is set and kept in motion by concrete practices of real people in real-life situations. It’s through such practices that a culture’s vitality increases or decreases. It is important to keep in mind that, “just as a physical pendulum responds sensitively to forces of nature such as gravity, propulsion, and inertia, this model is responsive to our lived realities” (Acheson & Schneider-Bean, 2019).

Specific forms of intercultural praxis vary from situation to situation, determined by the goal people want to achieve through their action. Hence, “intercultural praxis may manifest in a range of forms such as simple or

complex communication competency skills; oppositional tactics; and creative, improvisational, and transformational interventions” (Sorrells, 2010, p. 184). In other words, praxis can range from an open dialogue as one of the most constructive forms of intercultural communication, to discriminatory laws and violence as the most destructive forms. In all situations, though, a choice needs to be made and action taken. For example, the issue of English-only vs bilingual education takes the form of a number of concrete practices, such as conversations at the dinner table and political campaigns. When it is time, the issue takes on the form of a proposition voted upon at the ballot box. Voting is an important form of praxis. When people go to the ballot box and cast their votes, they give their voices in support of, or opposition to, a certain issue.

Overall,

intercultural practice operates as informed and engaged communicative action, suffused with an understanding of the positionality and standpoint of the communicators whose resources include intercultural knowledge, insight, and wisdom that opens onto a rich and diverse ensemble of interactional choices.

(Sorrells, 2014, p. 153)

Every form of praxis can be seen as a jointly enacted communicative choice; through such choices, people change the dialectical situation present at the moment, creating a new situation and therefore facing a new choice, etc. In a way, praxis, as the mechanism of the pendulum of intercultural communication, keeps the pendulum swinging as long as different cultures act together. If intercultural communication works like a clock, there is a lot of work behind such interactions. The movement of the pendulum is not at all times smooth, of course, and we will discuss what makes this movement more or less smooth in the next chapters. Right now, it is important to understand that cultures can keep their identities and remain stable only by interacting, i.e., constantly creating and changing their relationships.

4.3 *Intercultural Communication and Change*

Change is one of the core concepts of dialectics. It is impossible to understand the contradictory nature of intercultural communication without emphasizing its dynamic character. Intercultural communication exists insofar as people from different cultures continue to interact and change, resolving their contradictions and looking for the true meaning of every communicative practice. For example, there are different cultural views on the practice of drinking (Room & Makela, 2000). In ‘abstinent cultures,’ drinking is religiously and legally forbidden (some Islamic societies), in ‘strained ritual drinking cultures,’ a small amount is drunk only on certain occasions (Orthodox Jews), while in the so-called ‘banalized drinking cultures’ (e.g., southern European societies), drinking is more accepted.

However, none of these cultures can claim that their view on drinking is the only true one. Every cultural voice can exist only because there are other voices on the same issue. People from every culture can express themselves and maintain their identity as long as they carry an ongoing dialogue with other people, simultaneously diverging and converging. No culture owns the truth, and the search for knowledge is a joint enterprise.

Change, therefore, is inherent to communication: in “intercultural communication this translates as a desire for the transformation of intercultural consciousness” (O’Regan & MacDonald, 2007). In other words, intercultural communication is successful only if the consciousness of people from interacting cultures changes, as a result. This is understood very well, for example, by those who go on intercultural religious or spiritual missions, which can be successful only insofar as a certain transformation is brought about in the consciousness of the people who were initially ignorant of, or resistant to, the ideas propagated by the mission (Gittins, 2015).

Transformation occurs in every successful intercultural interaction, no matter how mundane. As a real-life example, Fons Trompenaars and Charles Hampden-Turner describe an incident at Motorola in one of its branches in East Asia. As part of its operation, the corporation established a certain practice regulating its interactions with East Asian engineers who

were given a \$2,000 housing allowance so that they could live comfortably adjacent to the plant. One day a senior engineer had to be contacted urgently at home and was found to be living in a shack. He had spent his housing allowance on putting his siblings through school.
(Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2002, p. 26)

It was clear that the established boundaries failed to be effective, creating a tense situation. In other words, the tables had turned on the very people who had established those boundaries; as a result, the people had to react to the new situation. The corporation could have fired the engineer as he had misallocated the funds. To its credit, the corporation decided that the engineer

had put the money to better use than he would have by isolating himself in relative luxury as the “kept man” of a foreign corporation. Was thinking of one’s own family an “offence?” The rules were changed. Today you can use the allowance for your own purpose and to implement local values.
(Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2002, p. 26)

This intercultural scenario can be understood, in terms of praxis, as creating a meaningful rule (money to be used as housing allowance) leading to new tensions (misallocation of funds) and resolving those tensions by establishing another rule (money to be used for one’s own purpose in accordance with cultural needs).

Transformation, therefore, involves any change, whether small or profound: the most important thing is that a change does take place and new boundaries for intercultural interactions are established. At the same time, these new boundaries begin to function as normative practices, affecting people's choices. In other words, people give "communicative life to the contradictions that organize their social life, but these contradictions in turn affect their subsequent communicative actions" (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996, pp. 13–14). Praxis is an inherent part of intercultural communication because new contradictions create new tensions that need to be resolved by a new action.

Intercultural communication is based on the assumption that cultures can, and do, change. In a way, "change can be likened to propulsion, an external force that causes the pendulum to swing" (Acheson & Schneider-Bean, 2019, p. 53). Every movement of the pendulum of intercultural communication brings about a change—sometimes dramatic, sometimes quite subtle. The two dangers of ethnocentrism, discussed in Chapter 4, lead to breakdowns in intercultural communication because they do not share this assumption. On the contrary, the Other is viewed as a passive object that cannot change and must be reduced to Self or ignored. As a result, interaction simply does not take place (Ethnocentric Negation), or it is replaced by an action of one culture on another, whereby the Other is reduced to Self (Ethnocentric Reduction). In both cases, the Other remains an outside object whose voice is not heard. In both cases, no real tension between Self and Other exists, and no interplay of opposing tendencies takes place. Self can develop and maintain its identity only through interaction with Other; once Other is ignored or reduced to Self, intercultural communication breaks down and the pendulum of intercultural communication stops. Self has no Other to interact with, having undermined its own stability by refusing to change. The very existence of cultures depends on their ongoing interplay. Stability is a result of change, which is the only true constant. *Panta Rhei*—'all is flux.'

5 The Pendulum Principle Defined

Let's now give a more concise formulation of the Pendulum Principle, based on the above discussion of its three parts.

We noted the contradictory nature of intercultural communication. In every intercultural interaction, there are opposing tendencies at work, and in each case, these oppositions are unified, forming an interactive unity. The contradictory nature of intercultural communication, therefore, consists in the ongoing interplay of opposing forces.

Tensions between cultures are created and resolved through concrete practices (praxis). People act as subjects, establishing new boundaries for intercultural interactions. At the same time, these new boundaries begin to function as normative practices, affecting people's choices. Therefore, every form of praxis is a jointly enacted communicative choice. This

joint effort is what keeps the pendulum of intercultural communication swinging.

We also showed that it is impossible to understand intercultural communication without emphasizing its ever-changing nature. Intercultural communication continues as long as cultures keep interacting, every movement of the pendulum affected by, and affecting, their positions. Every cultural position can be seen as a ‘voice’—a stance from which a culture collectively speaks. Intercultural communication is polyphonic by nature because it involves many ‘voices’ from different cultures.

In a nutshell, the Pendulum Principle can be formulated as follows:

Intercultural communication is an ongoing and interactive process that simultaneously connects and keeps apart people from different groups, producing multiple voices.

6 Case Study: ‘Dialectics of Colonial Encounter: Interacting with the Kobon’

This case study is based on the article entitled ‘The transformation of violence in the colonial encounter: Intercultural discourse and practices in Papua New Guinea’ (Görlich, 1999). As usual, it is recommended that you read the article in its entirety; below, you find a summary of the article.

Be ready to identify and then discuss the following topics:

1. The contradictory nature of the colonial encounter.
2. What strategies were employed in the interactions?
3. What transformations emerged from these interactions?

The article analyzes the dialectics of the interactions between the Australian administration and the Kobon culture in the northern Highlands of Papua New Guinea between 1953 and 1975. The article begins by describing the precolonial social order among the Kobon as based on reciprocity and characterized by such activities as the exchange of material goods, women, and services, including violence, e.g., acts of vengeance. For example, when someone died, the person thought to be responsible for that death had to be found and killed in revenge; this act was justified by attributing the death to witchcraft. Finding and killing the witch was carried out through a surprise attack; afterwards, everyone involved in the vengeance received compensation payments from the relatives of the avenged person. If a surprise attack was not successful, the ritualized battle took place between up to a hundred people on each side, which continued until the first lives were lost, causing one side to retreat. A peace ceremony after the battle did not exclude future acts of vengeance. Violence therefore was not regarded by the Kobon as something negative, which was a major obstacle for the Australian culture to overcome.

The very first contacts between the Kobon and Australian officers made it clear that two radically different cultural concepts clashed—‘law and order’ and ‘state of nature.’ The first contacts were characterized by a lot of uncertainty and tension; the Kobon associated the white people with spirits, while the officers could not but feel the real danger of violence emanating from the opposite party. In this risky situation the Australian patrols communicated their peaceful intentions by offering gifts, trading by barter, and, where possible, communicating orally through bilingual speakers. Insofar as the Kobon willingly participated in exchange transactions, they saw the white people not only as a threat but also as a potential ally that could be mobilized to help in the realization of their own goals. At the same time, the colonial message was clear: it signaled a desire to cooperate and, on the other hand, to use violence if the Kobon continued their vengeance killings. The Australian administration communicated this message through oral orders to refrain from violence and demonstration of their firearms. Also, they would set up a large camp at the spot where the vengeance killing had taken place and talk to the Kobon, explaining the purpose and intentions of the Australian administration. They also exploited the importance of the Kobon ritual of *parom*—a dance festival where extensive exchanges took place. During this festival, the officers displayed their superior weapons, threatened to use them, and announced prison sentences as a sanction for vengeance killings. By that time, the Kobon had become familiar with the concepts of court proceedings and prison. Some of the former Kobon prisoners were later re-educated and appointed as assistants to the patrol officers.

Step by step, the Australians made the new state of things more acceptable to the Kobon people. Patrols now carried out such new activities as taking a census, collecting taxes, and organizing elections. The author of the article notes that, in describing their experiences to him, the Kobon repeatedly mentioned the importance of such new rituals in their interactions with the Australians as the daily morning and evening roll call, hoisting the flag, and census patrols in which they had been ordered to stand in line in front of the officer.

Gradually, a number of significant changes in the interactions between the Kobon and Australians took place. For example, the Kobon stopped using direct physical violence against those suspected of witchcraft; instead, they began to use symbolic violence in the form of counter-witchcraft. As before, the participants in a counter-witchcraft action received compensation payments in return for their service. The attitude toward witchcraft changed, too. It is no longer seen as the embodiment of antisocial behavior, undermining the cultural order; some people even speak openly about their skills in witchcraft, as if advertising their services and hoping for compensation payments. The concept of witchcraft now includes the idea of its manipulation. Naturally, now that the risk of violent conflicts has been reduced, it is possible for the administration to build more cooperative relationships with the Kobon people.

Now let's see how this case study can be an illustration of Pendulum Principle of intercultural communication.

1. The contradictory nature of the colonial encounter.

The intercultural encounter described in the article is clearly characterized by two opposing forces—the Kobon people and the Australian administration ('the colonized' and 'the colonizers'). In this encounter, two cultural concepts—'law and order' and 'state of nature'—give rise to tensions and a lot of uncertainty. To the Kobon, the white people first appear as spirits that may or may not be peaceful, while the officers find themselves in a highly risky situation, facing possible and unjustified violence. The centrifugal forces of difference are strong as the people from each culture are motivated to preserve their own order. At the same time, the encounter brings the two cultures together and forces them to interact. The first steps made by the administration include giving gifts, and the Kobon take part in such exchange transactions. As a result, the centripetal forces of unity begin to operate in their transactions as well. So, the nature of this colonial encounter is truly contradictory, showing the interplay between two opposing forces. The Kobon people often had no choice other than to submit to the force of the Australian administration; hence, their interaction is labeled 'a colonial encounter.' At the same time, the white officers could not but listen to the Kobon collective voice too; that dialogue was carried out through a number of strategies in praxis.

2. What strategies were employed in the interactions?

Initially, intercultural communication was mostly carried out through simple barter transaction such as an exchange of gifts. The nonverbal strategy of the firearms display was used along with such exchanges. At the same time, verbal communication was also employed from the start in the form of orders, threats, and explanation. For instance, explanation (of the purpose and intentions of the Australian administration) was the main part of conducting camps at the spot where the vengeance killing had taken place. Later, the strategy of political instruction made it possible for the people from the two cultures to start using more complex forms of praxis, such as court proceedings and carrying out elections.

Of special importance was the use of rituals. For example, the Australian patrols were able to exploit the Kobon ritual of *parom*, preserving its original nature as a dance festival where extensive exchanges took place and, at the same time, introducing a new message of prohibiting physical violence in acts of vengeance. The Kobon themselves mentioned the importance of such new rituals in their interactions with the Australians as the daily morning and evening roll call, hoisting the flag, and census patrols when they had been ordered to stand

in line in front of the officer. All these strategies transformed the interactions between the Australians and the Kobon.

3. What transformations emerged from these interactions?

First of all, violence is no longer viewed by the Kobons as an integral part of their culture; this perhaps is one of the most significant transformations. The Kobon stopped using direct physical violence against those suspected of witchcraft and began to use symbolic violence in the form of counter-witchcraft. Another transformation was the attitude change toward witchcraft in general. It is no longer seen as the embodiment of antisocial behavior, undermining the cultural order, and some people even advertise their services, looking for compensation payments. The concept of witchcraft has been transformed to include the idea of its manipulation. The risk of violent conflicts between the Australians and the Kobon has been reduced, and it is now possible for the two cultures to build more cooperative relationships with each other. This is not to say, however, that the interactions between these two cultures have lost their contradictory nature. Newly established boundaries simply create new tensions that need to be resolved so every intercultural interaction is an ongoing encounter.

7 Side Trips

7.1 *Speaking Spanish at a Border*

The article entitled ‘A border agent detained two Americans speaking Spanish: Now they have sued’ (Stack, 2019), describes a lawsuit, filed by the American Civil Liberties Union against the United States Customs and Border Protection on behalf of two American women—Ana Suda and Martha Hernandez, who were stopped inside a convenience store in Havre, Montana, by a border agent who said he was asking for their identification because he heard them speaking Spanish. The lawsuit alleges that Customs and Border Protection violated the Fourth Amendment to the Constitution because the agency did not have probable cause to detain the women. When Ms. Suda asked a Customs and Border Protection supervisor, who arrived on the scene, if they would have been detained if they had been speaking French, he replied: “No, we don’t do that.” In a statement, Ms. Suda said, as a result of that humiliating experience, she and Ms. Hernandez had been shunned by other residents in Havre. Ms. Suda also said that her daughter was afraid to speak Spanish and now responds in English when her mother speaks to her in Spanish. “This changed our lives, I believe, forever,” Ms. Suda said in the statement.

** Using the ideas of the dialectical perspective on intercultural communication, do you find this encounter successful?

7.2 *Linguistic Landscapes and Cultural Transformations*

The article, entitled ‘Translanguaging space and creative activity: Collaborative ethnography and arts-based learning’ (Bradley et al., 2017), describes a transdisciplinary educational arts project, conducted as part of ‘Translation and Translanguaging: Investigating Linguistic and Cultural Transformations’—a large-scale multi-site linguistic ethnographic study of urban multilingualism. The project focuses on the linguistic landscape of four cities—Birmingham, Cardiff, Leeds, and London—as an interplay between language, visual communication, and the spatial cultural. Taking research into the multilingual linguistic landscape as its starting point, the project invited the young artists/researchers to explore their own notions of ‘home’ and analyze the real-life settings in which their subjectivities are produced and transformed.

** Do you find this project potentially leading to more successful intercultural interactions in those four UK cities? Can you think of similar projects that have been, or could be, undertaken elsewhere with the goal of improving intercultural communication?

7.3 *In Montreal, a Berlin Wall of the Mind?*

In the article, entitled ‘In Montreal, a Berlin Wall of the mind?’ (Bilefsky, 2018), the author describes how he found his home city of Montreal after living abroad for 28 years. Montreal has been bifurcated with its Anglophone minority and Francophone majority, while also being surrounded by an Anglophone majority in the rest of the country. Bilefsky recalls how in the 1980s the city was consumed by a referendum on independence, and thousands of English-speaking Quebecers were leaving the province. He talks about his school years when he spoke English at home, watched American sitcoms and lived in a parallel universe from his French Canadian peers. Three decades later, Bilefsky found separatism largely in retreat as almost half of the population of Quebec speak both French and English, this shift especially evident in the younger generation. While, as the title of his article suggests, there are still some lingering problems, Montreal today shows more unity, not the division of the city. Bilefsky quotes Marie Bouchard, a 23-year-old political science student at Université de Montréal, who says: ‘I love French, it’s my language,’ quickly adding, ‘But if I only spoke French, it would limit my horizons.’

** How can this article be analyzed in terms of the Pendulum Principle?

References

- Acheson, K. & Schneider-Bean, S. (2019). Representing the intercultural development continuum as a pendulum: Addressing the lived experiences of intercultural competence development and maintenance. *European Journal of Cross-Cultural Competence and Management*, 5(1): 42–61.

- Alora, A. & Lumitao, J. (2002). Beyond a Western bioethics: Voices from the developing world. *Perspectives in Biology and Medicine*, 45(4): 627–628.
- Asimov, N. (1998). Big victory for measure to end bilingual education. *San Francisco Chronicle*, June 3.
- Bakhtin, M. (1984). *Problems of Dostoevsky's poetics*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Barker, V., Giles, H., Noels, K., Duck, J., Hecht, M., & Clément, R. (2001). The English-only movement: A communication analysis of changing perceptions of language vitality. *Journal of Communication*, 51(1): 3–37.
- Baxter, L. & Montgomery, B. (1996). *Relating: Dialogues and dialectics*. New York and London: The Guilford Press.
- Bilefsky, D. (2018). In Montreal, a Berlin Wall of the mind? *New York Times*, March 5.
- Bouhris, R., Sachdev, I., Ehala, M., & Giles, H. (2019). Assessing 40 years of group vitality research and future directions. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, 38(4): 409–422.
- Bradley, J., Moore, E., Simpson, J., & Atkinson, L. (2017). Translanguaging space and creative activity: Collaborative ethnography and arts-based learning. *Language and Intercultural Communication*, 18(1): 54–73.
- de Vries R. E. (2002). Ethnic tension in paradise: Explaining ethnic supremacy aspirations in Fiji. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 26: 311–327.
- Dennis, L. (2003). Aboriginal voices in textual spaces. www.fl.net.au/~lyndenal/204essay.htm. Accessed July 10, 2019.
- Drzewiecka, J. & Nakayma, T. (Eds.) (2018). *Global dialectics in intercultural communication: Case studies*. Bern: Peter Lang.
- Evans, F. (2008). *The multivoiced body: Society and communication in the age of diversity*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Fire arrest increases race tension (2002). *Spokesman-Review*, July 2.
- Flyvbjerg, B. (2001). *Making social science matter: Why social inquiry fails and how it can succeed again*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gao, Y. (2016). Introduction: Dialogical perspectives on intercultural communication as social practice. *Language and Intercultural Communication*, 17(1): 1–6.
- Giles, H. & Johnson, P. (1987). Ethnolinguistic identity theory: A social psychological approach to language maintenance. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 68: 69–100.
- Giles, H., Bourhis, R. Y., & Taylor, D. M. (1977). Toward a theory of language in ethnic group relations. In H. Giles (Ed.), *Language, ethnicity and intergroup relations*. London: Academic Press.
- Gittins, A. (2015). *Living mission interculturally: Faith, culture, and the renewal of praxis*. Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, Inc.
- Goldenberg, C. & Wagner, K. (2015). Bilingual education: Reviving an American tradition. *American Educator*, 39(3): 28–32.
- Gonzalez, A., Houston, M., & Chen, V. (Eds.) (2015). *Our voices: Essays in culture, ethnicity, and communication*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Görlich, J. (1999). The transformation of violence in the colonial encounter: Intercultural discourses and practices in Papua New Guinea. *Ethnology*, 38(2): 151–162.
- Hazans, M. (2019) Emigration from Latvia: A brief history and driving forces in the twenty-first century. In R. Kaša & I. Mieriņa (Eds.), *The emigrant communities of Latvia* (pp. 35–68). IMISCOE Research Series. Cham: Springer.
- Holquist, M. (1990). *Dialogism: Bakhtin and his world*. London: Routledge.
- Hopkinson, A. (2017). A new era for bilingual education: explaining California's Proposition 58. *EdSource*, January 6. <https://edsources.org/2017/a-new-era-for-bilingual-education-explaining-californias-proposition-58/574852>. Accessed October 22, 2019.

- Irwin, H. (1996). *Communicating with Asia: Understanding people and customs*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin.
- Ji, Li-Jun, Nisbett, R., & Su, Y. (2001). Culture, change, and prediction. *Psychological Science*, 12(6): 450–456.
- Kratochwil, F. (2018). *Praxis: On acting and knowing*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Martin, J. (2017). Dialectics of culture and communication. In Y. Kim (Ed.), *The international encyclopedia of intercultural communication*. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/9781118783665.ieicc0215>. Accessed June 14, 2019.
- Maslow, A. (1954). *Motivation and personality*. New York: Harper and Bros.
- Mattson, M. & Stage, C. (2001). Toward an understanding of intercultural ethical dilemmas as opportunities for engagement in new millennium global organizations. *Management Communication Quarterly*, 15(1): 103–109.
- Ollman, B. (1998). Why dialectics? Why now? *Science and Society*, 62(3): 338–357.
- Oonk, G. (2002). Globalization and culture/globalization and identity: Dialectics of flow and closure. *Journal of World History*, 13(2): 532–537.
- O'Regan, J. P. & MacDonald, M. N. (2007). Cultural relativism and the discourse of intercultural communication: Aporias of praxis in the intercultural public sphere. *Language and Intercultural Communication*, 7(4): 267–277.
- Phillipson, R. (1992). *Linguistic imperialism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Phillipson, R. (2008). The linguistic imperialism of neoliberal empire. *Critical Inquiry in Language Studies*, 5(1): 1–43.
- Phillipson, R. (2010). *Linguistic imperialism continued*. New York: Routledge.
- Putnam, L. (2001). 2000 ICA presidential address: Shifting voices, oppositional discourse, and new visions for communication studies. *Journal of Communication*, 51(1): 38–51.
- Room, R. & Makela, L. (2000). Typologies of the cultural position of drinking. *Journal of Studies on Alcohol*, May: 475–483.
- Semenov, A. (2018). The issue of continuing discrimination of the Russian-speaking population in Latvia. *CIS-EMO*, September 18. www.osce.org/odihr/394844?download=true. Accessed November 11, 2019.
- Sorrels, L. (2010). Re-imagining intercultural communication in the context of globalization. In T. Nakayama & R. T. Halualani (Eds.), *The handbook of critical intercultural communication* (pp. 171–189). Oxford: Blackwell.
- Sorrells, K. (2014). Intercultural praxis: Transforming intercultural communication competence for the 21st century. In X. Dai & G.-M. Chen (Eds.), *Intercultural communication competence: Conceptualization and its development in cultural contexts and interactions* (pp. 144–169). Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Stack, L. (2019). A border agent detained two Americans speaking Spanish: Now they have sued. *New York Times*, February 14. www.nytimes.com/2019/02/14/us/border-patrol-montana-spanish.html Accessed December 5, 2019.
- Sullivan, N. & Schatz, R. (1999). When cultures collide: The official language debate. *Language and Communication*, 19: 261–275.
- Trompenaars, F. & Hampden-Turner, C. (2002). *21 leaders for the 21st century: How innovative leaders manage in the digital age*. New York: McGraw-Hill.