

# THE ABILITY OF INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

*Radu MIRCEA\**  
*Vasile DRĂGOI\*\**

***Abstract:** The article presents a mechanism which enables the intercultural communication through improved methods and techniques of communication and the acquisition of the abilities of intercultural communication. Each individual is the bearer of patterns of thinking, feeling and potential manifestations, which he/she acquired along his/her life, and understanding the culture of the other facilitates communication. The intercultural communication refers to the communication between people whose cultural systems of perceptions and values are sufficiently different to alter/influence the process of communication between them. The ability of intercultural communication presumes an understanding of the way in which culture influences the expectations, behaviour and ability to recognise and use the cultural differences as resources to learn and solve the problems within different contexts. It also presumes the capacity for self-awareness and to use the abilities and techniques of communication in general. The article provides concrete aspects which can facilitate communication with people coming from different cultures.*

***Key words:** intercultural communication, communication, culture, behaviour, stereotype, active listening.*

When communicating with a foreigner, it is not enough just to know a common language, but also, as we will see in the following, to take into consideration a general variable that influences the process of communication, the culture in which the individual has grown. More and more foreigners come to our territory, and an efficient communication is the first aspect that needs to be paid attention in order to establish a mutual, profitable relationship and for avoiding possible conflicts.

---

\* PhD student of University of Bucharest, Romanian Office of Immigration, Ministry of Administration and Interior, email: radu\_i\_mircea@yahoo.com.

\*\* PhD public order and national security, General Director of Romanian Office of Immigration, Ministry of Administration and Interior, email: vasile.dragoi@gmail.com.

The article targets two main objectives:

- understanding the mechanism through which the intercultural communication is made;
- identifying the methods and techniques of improving intercultural communication and gaining the ability for intercultural communication.

### ***Defining the concepts: culture, communication, intercultural communication***

We are communicating all the time—in our homes, at our jobs, in the group that we take part or in the wide community. No matter if we think that we understand each other, communication is a difficult process (think of how often you hear affirmations like: “he didn’t understand this” or “he really didn’t hear what I said”). The culture we attend is often at the base of the processes involved in communication and it influences our point of view, how we approach things, the way in which we behave in the group and community. People communicate different, because they come from different cultures, in which they learn languages, different rules and norms. Understanding the other’s culture facilitates communication. Every individual carries certain ways of thinking, feeling and potential manifestations gained along his life. Much of them come from childhood, because at that time individual is the most capable of learning and assimilating. As some thinking and feeling abilities had been implemented in a person’s mind, he has to let go of them before it is capable of learning something different and this giving up is harder than the initial learning. Human beings have a strong desire of being together with people who resemble them, whom they can share similar ways of acting, thinking, the same values and rules. We can say that they feel comfortable this way. But daily situation shows us that this thing remains a desire and the ways of human interaction are not the same for all. This fact does not become just discomfort for the actors of the interaction, but it can even represent experiences that are often shocking.

### ***The Culture***

Culture is a complex concept, with many definitions, but, in a simple way of understanding, culture refers to a group or community who shares common experiences that determine the members to have a view upon the world; it includes features of gender, race or nationality which are specific features of the belonging group. As an example, we can have a new culture if we move in a new region, through changing the social status or if we gain a disability. This way we realize that we belong, the same time, to more cultures. People are facing common problems, which need to be solved. But for these common problems there are different

solutions, because people think, feel and act different. From here, we conclude the necessity of understanding these differences, the motives and causes that are behind these differences.

Geert Hofstede, using the analogy of the way in which computers are programmed, sees culture as being a “mental programming”. Of course, this does not mean that people are programmed as computers. A person’s behavior is determined only partially by his mental programs, having a native ability to deviate from them and react in new creative, destructive or unexpected ways. The sources of some mental individual programs come from the social environments in which someone has grown and gained life experience. The programming starts within the family, continues in friends, at school, in groups of young, at jobs and life community. In other words, culture is the collective programming of thinking which distinguishes the members of a group from the members of another group. Culture is learnt, not inherited. It comes from the individual’s social environment; it is not a genetic inheritance. On the other hand, an individual’s personality is its unique set of mental programs which he cannot share with no other human being; it is based on features which are partially inherited and partially learnt, meaning that they are changed through the influence of collective programming (of culture), and the unique personal experiences (Hofstede, 1996).

Culture generates/offers interpretation schemes of reality and ways of behaving and it is a generating and sharing process for meanings inside a social system. This social system includes values, norms and ways of behavior, interaction and communicating with others. Culture is something learnt from parents, school, media or the wide community and is not something fixed, but is continuously changing. In order to facilitate the communication between persons belonging to different cultures, we need to understand the reality as being socially built, to understand that different groups can have values, customs, conventions and different suppositions about the world and different ways of communicating. Culture represents all the attributes of a group or a subgroup, dynamic attributes which are changing in time: shared values, beliefs and basic suppositions, but also the behaviors that they determined. Culture can be seen as an iceberg: the external part, visible (made of behaviors and beliefs) is explicitly learnt, conscious, hard to change and made of “subjective” knowledge. When we speak about culture, we also generalize other ways it cannot be possible. That is why classifications and the tips of culture can be seen only as generalizations and abstract things.

### ***Communication***

As the essence of human bonds, communication is the set of physical and psychological processes through which the operation of putting in relation is made in one or more persons in order to achieve some objectives (Irena Chiru, 2003). Communication is the exchange of messages and the creation of meanings/signification. Also,

communication is efficient in the degree in which we succeed in reducing misunderstanding.

We must start from the following premises:

- we cannot always know for sure what the other one thinks and feels;
- we are conditioned by symbols, often very ambiguous, which inform us about people;
- we use our own system (cognitive, of representation) of coding and encoding the reality that depends of our mental state at a certain moment.

Misunderstanding can appear because:

- transmitting the message in a way in which others cannot understand;
- different communication rules;
- language difficulties;
- different social contexts;
- unfamiliar conversation subject.

### ***Intercultural communication***

Communication takes place between people among which there are different degrees of familiarity. The concept of “foreigner” is a key-element in understanding the process of intercultural communication. A foreigner has limited knowledge upon the new environment, about the new norms and values. On the other hand, inhabitants have few information about a foreigner, about his believes, interests and customs. Generally speaking, communicating with another involves predicting and anticipating his answers. When we are communicating with someone familiar, we are, usually, confident in our anticipations/predictions, even if we do not realize these expectations. In contrast, when we communicate with foreigners, we are more aware of the wide category of possible answers and of the uncertainty regarding our predictions. Predictions suppose by the process of communication are based on data achieved from three levels:

- The cultural level - information about the other’s culture, about his dominant values and norms; often, it is the only accessible level of information, when we are communicating with foreigners. Even in this situation, a right understanding of culture from which it comes leads to “predictions close to reality”;
- The socio-cultural level - information about the group from which he belongs; these are dominant data used in intercultural communication;
- The psycho-cultural level - information about the individual characteristics (the kind of data relevant in communication between friends).

We understand these data through the process of social cognition. Social cognition is a process which involves grouping particular data in categories based on similarity and distinguishing individuals from categories according to the differences between them. Communication with foreigners involves the process of categorization and, also, using stereotypes, stereotypes which cannot be applied on present persons. In order to improve communication we must pay attention to the individual features, unique, of the interlocutor, but to be aware of our own behavior of communication, which involves:

- automate categorization (without conscious control) of the things and individuals and including them in stereotypes;
- most of the daily communication activities follow some familiar scenarios, but when we are communicating with foreigners, we cannot base on these scenarios. Our communication can be improved when we are aware of the fact that these familiar scenarios do not fit to the actual situation and try to change them properly.

Generally, in the process of communication, we try to reduce uncertainty. Communication with foreigners, involves, mostly, a high level of uncertainty, due to the difficulties in predicting their answers. We are experiencing uncertainty regarding the foreigner's attitude, feelings and their beliefs. Also, it is hard to explain foreigner's behavior in certain moments. The motivation of reducing this uncertainty is stronger when are expecting to interact in the future with them or when they are sources for a potential benefit. We can reduce the degree of uncertainty and accuracy of the predictions through getting information about foreigners, using the following three stages:

- passive observation of the foreigner;
- active search of information from his friends or other sources;
- getting direct information from the foreigner through direct discussions and questions, mutual exchange of information: give information about yourself in order to get information about the other.

Increasing the degree of uncertainty in interaction with foreigners is followed by a high level of anxiety, negative anticipations and feeling of confusion and even losing control of the situation- the fear of seeming incompetent, of being exploited or being perceived negative by the others (foreigners, but also members of your own group).

In our days, what is happening in a part of the world affects the others, the world is getting smaller and smaller regarding the means of communication and interactions with people coming from different cultures has increased. Unavoidable, misunderstandings and obstacles in communication appear. The study of

intercultural communication implies to the need of examining communication and the interactions between the people belonging to different cultures and subcultures. Fundamental in the study of intercultural communication is the belief that people are learning to communicate in their culture's specific way. A Chinese, an Australian or a Romanian learn to communicate as another Chinese, Australian or Romanian. Their behavior expresses meanings because it is taught and shared by others. In other words, it is cultural. This way, the means in which people communicate, specific to their language, style, nonverbal behavior are culturally determined. In this way, if cultures are different, the practices and communication behaviors will be different.

Intercultural communication is the communication between people of whom cultural system of perceptions and values are different enough to alter/ influence the process of communication between them. The possibility of appearing misunderstandings is present in every moment in the process of intercultural communication, especially if the cultural differences are high. More cultures are alike, less their influence in communication. For example, in the situations of intercultural communication in which Americans and Canadians are involved, their cultures do not have a strong impact on communication, because they have many things in common (language, geography, religion, political system, etc.), while if we refer to a situation of communication between Germans and Chinese, we can expect that the cultural differences between them (physical appearance, language, religion, the concept about them, etc.) to produce misunderstandings in communication. When we are communicating with someone from another culture, we must take into account the possible cultural differences, which come from perceptions/our different representations, which determine the way of communication. Understanding the way which people represent their world, their own values and beliefs leads to a better understanding and anticipation of the possible misunderstandings. But what do we understand through perceptions, beliefs and values in an intercultural context?

Perception is defined as being the internal process through which we select, organize and interpret information coming from the external environment. In other words, it is an individualized process and there are no persons that could perceive the world in the same way, and this thing gains a greater importance when we come in contrast with people who belong from different cultures. The way in which each and every one of us perceives the world is learnt and it is a part of our cultural experience. For example, if you want to choose a certain dish, clothing or to get some peaces of advice from a doctor, reactions to these events are learnt in your own culture. Our perception is cultural determined and influences our way of communicating with others.

Our beliefs are judgments which we have regarding what is real or probable. Usually, they are tied by objects or events which have certain characteristics about which we think are real, even in the situation in which we do not have obvious proofs.

For example, we have beliefs referring to religion (God exists), events (the meeting was a success), other people (she is friendly) and even about us (I am a hard working person). Most of our beliefs are ideas about the way in which things look so and function, about their causes, giving explanations about the aspects which would be unexplainable (climate, death, love, etc.). Just as our perceptions, beliefs are determined by the package and our cultural experience. Early we had learnt in what to believe according to what is considered to be valuable and true in our culture. In addition, our system of beliefs forms the base of our values that mostly determine the way of behaving and relations with others.

Values reunite the set of beliefs which serve to guidance and directing the behavior; it represents norm of culture and specify, for example, what is good or bad, right or wrong, polite or impolite, appropriate or inappropriate. In other words, it gives us a set of behavior rules which lead to reducing uncertainty in which regards the future. As perceptions and beliefs, values are learnt and, because of this reason, are the subject of interpretation. When we interpret a behavior, an object or event, we make judgments of value that reflect our particular culture. For example, an Englishman who appreciates a high personal distance could consider as being impolite a Mexican which is sitting too close or a Japanese who appreciates conformity can find inappropriate an American's excessive expression of his opinions. The relative importance of values in each culture can be relevant through expressions like: "Time is money" (USA), "A zebra does not misprice her own stripes" (Africa) or "It is not necessary to know the person, just the family" (China). A thing which needs to be avoided is to make simpler and generalize other cultures ("Asian students are like this one" or "African students are like that one" does not represent a thing because Asia and Africa are wide regions, made of many nations). Even the idea of a "Chinese student" is a generalization that often leads to deforming reality. When we refer to communication between cultures, we must not consider them separate and static, but more dynamic and in a continuous interaction.

### ***Obstacles in the process of intercultural communication*** ■■■■■

Anyone grows and physically and intellectually develops in a certain culture, which already existed before the birth. The influence of this culture is so subtle and total that we do not put the problem, in most of the cases, that our point of view, act and action in this world can be limited at the society in which we live, it can be a particular way of seeing things, feel and act in a specific way in a certain social group, that lives in a certain geographical region and period of time. Erich Fromm called this thing "social unconsciousness", and considered it to have an enormous force and influence upon people. As an example, someone who has lived in New York in the XIX century was influenced by things and different contexts from the ones we have been influenced, in the present. The specific of a culture can be, sometimes, the easiest thing to observe if we watch the common interest aspects of those who

belong to a certain culture (usual conversation subjects), but also what is not approached, what people do not talk about.

### ***Egocentrism***

In a communication process, people are involved with their own personality and individuality. Each and every one of us, behind our own culture, have personality features which are specific only to us, determined by the genetic inheritance, the structure and dynamic of the family, experience, education etc., features which affect our way of thinking, feeling and acting, giving us a personalized character.

### ***Dogmatism***

All human beings seem to have the natural tendency of conservation, to keep and protect what was considered in the past to function efficient. It happens that, in extreme situation, unfortunately not seldom, so called “dogmatist” to not allow the appearance of questions, doubts, new information. Short, they do not allow critics; they use circular arguments, such as: “I am always right. Why should I believe? Because I am always right”.

### ***Stereotypes***

Samovar and Porter (1991) defined stereotypes as being the perceptions or beliefs that we have about certain groups or persons, based on prior attitudes or opinions. In other words, stereotypes do not develop suddenly; they are formed in a period of time in a culture. They can be positive or negative and “help” us to give the surrounding world a meaning through categorization and classification of people and situations that we encounter. We use, often, stereotypes when we meet with people or situations that we are not used to; although stereotypes can reduce the fear of unknown, they interfere with perceptions and our judgments regarding persons and groups, leading to misunderstandings due to simplification, generalization and/or exaggerations that come with them. Affirmations like: “People of color are...”, “Sportsmen are not...”, “Women should...” are stereotypes due to the fact that they are based on half the truth or distortions referring to certain groups of people.

### ***Prejudice***

Prejudice, as stereotypes, can be positive or negative and, in general, refer to attitudes and intolerant and unfair opinions, regarding other persons or groups or persons, based on the simple fact that they belong to a certain religion, race, nationality or group. A person who thinks that he does not want certain people who belong to a certain group to live in the same neighborhood expresses a prejudice



based on opinions, attitudes, unfounded beliefs, which do not take into consideration the individual rights of a person, but only the characteristics that come from belonging to that group.

### ***Nonverbal communication***

Nonverbal communication involves the sum of stimulations (except the verbal ones) present in the context of a communication situation, generated by the individual and which contain a potential message. Nonverbal messages can take many shapes: personal space, gesture, facial and eye movements, using time, interpersonal touch, clothing etc. The meanings attached to these things vary from a culture to another and lead to misunderstandings. The role of nonverbal communication is often reduced, but, from the total messages sent by a person, 7% are verbal- words, 38% are vocal – inflexion, voice tonality, and 55% are nonverbal messages; more precisely, in case of a conversation, the verbal component has 35%, and the nonverbal one 65%. Therefore, willing or not, on purpose or not, we send and receive nonverbal messages and, based on them, we have prejudices and make decisions for us and others, regarding our own and other's experiences. The observation is more real in the degree in which, a weight of 90%, the impression about the interlocutor is formed from nonverbal information, in the first ten seconds of the meeting; the first messages, mostly nonverbal, color and determine the further perception (Irena Chiru, 2003).

### ***The competence of intercultural communication***

It is normal to join the community's values in which you have grown, live and interact, but, also, it is important to understand that your way of thinking and acting is not universal. Ethnocentrism is the belief in the universality of your own culture, through which you judge aspects from other cultures. In other words, saying that the vision upon world of your own culture is the only one available and true/ valuable.

Bennett (1993) proposed a model of stage developing of perceiving intercultural differences (model regarding the development of intercultural sensitivity), which underlines the stages through people pass in situation of intercultural contact:

1. denial: not admitting cultural differences;
2. defense: admitting some differences, but they are seen as being negative;
3. minimize: being unaware of your projections, which come from cultural inheritance;
4. acceptance: understanding the fact that the same behavior can have different cultural meanings;

5. accommodation: assessing the other's behavior from his perspective and adapting your own behavior to different culture norms;
6. integration: easily handling different cultural norms and solving, without conflicts, the possible identity problems.

The competence of intercultural communication is the degree in which a person adapts to the verbal and nonverbal communication behavior in a new cultural context. This competence is rather what it perceived about another person than the actual quality (internal feature/ ability) of that person. In other words, someone can seem able to somebody and unable to another person, especially when the competence of intercultural communication varies from a situation to another. An appropriate behavior in a cultural context means, on one hand, fulfilling rules, norms and expectations from that cultural context and, on the other hand, reaching goals from the point of view of communication (for example, avoiding uncertainty, ambiguity). There are three components of the competence of communication, which correspond to the features of the communication situation (the material and social context, interior contacts, status differences, the interventions of the possible tertiary etc.) which are interdependent:

- A) The cognitive component refers to how much does a person know about the other's culture and includes minimum knowledge about the dominant values and beliefs. Here we encounter the other side, the negative one: verbal and nonverbal simple and rigid scenarios, ethnocentrism, stereotypes etc.
- B) The affective component refers to the degree in which a person seeks to avoid the situation of intercultural communication, meaning that the motivation to interact with people from other cultures (in the conditions in which such a situation implies stress, uncertainty, ambiguity, anxiety) and the ability to manage such stressfully situations.
- C) The psycho-motor component is the manifestation of the cognitive and affective components and it includes verbal and nonverbal performances and the role played in situations of communication.

Regarding the preparing activity in the intercultural domain, there are three main approaches:

- the first one seeks getting knowledge and communication abilities regarding a particular culture;
- the second one seeks getting general abilities, which can be applied in the communication process to any cultural group and it leads to creating an addiction towards the given cultural context or towards certain "cultural experts";

- combining these two approaches through getting general abilities of communication, plus punctual knowledge referring to certain cultural groups.

The three approaches lead to gaining a competence of intercultural communication, but it highlights certain aspects. To know that a person comes from a country with a specific culture does not allow you to think that we have enough information about his way of thinking and behavior (the power to predict behavior), but rather alerts us regarding the possibility of potential misunderstandings in communication. That is why, the attempt to realize a list of how to behave with the members of the culture X, Y or Z is just a simple attempt to solve possible problems in communication, and, often, it is the cause of misunderstandings. Of course, knowing aspects about certain cultures is important in forming a personal opinion, but the fact of approaching every situation individually, taking into account the features of the interlocutor and the context, is more practical. To support this affirmation, many researches in the intercultural domain have shown that intra-cultural differences are more significant than intercultural ones. It is hard to know what is allowed in a culture and what not, from the outsider's perspective. It is useful to learn some communication strategies. For example, when you are in doubt, to ask about the meaning, using and connotation of terms. Anyway, you must be careful, if you are not sure that what you want to say is accepted.

We consider that the main steps of the preparing process in order to gain competence of intercultural communication (gaining knowledge, understanding, attitude and required abilities) are the following:

Stage 1. Understanding the way in which culture influences thinking and behavior, exploiting the way in which people built "an image of reality" (a mental model) and practicing reevaluation of the suppositions and conclusions (culturally determined). In other words, understanding the way in which behavior is guided by the "mental theories of action" (cognitive scenarios, programs that require that in situation X (conditions) the Z strategy will be used in order to achieve purpose Y). These mental programs are built through experience and are often learnt through the process of socialization in a culture (in family, school, organization); scenarios allow people to interpret and answer almost immediately, without being aware of this fact. This type of automat behavior is highly specialized and it becomes inefficient in a different cultural context.

Stage 2. Understanding the fact that, in order to communicate, firstly, it is required to listen, take and exercise your communication abilities needed in any kind of interaction/ communication, not just intercultural communication.

At first glance, communication in general, not just the one with foreigners, can seem easy, but in reality it is extremely difficult to achieve. First of all, because of the lack of understanding the way in which the mind works, the way in which information from

the exterior come continuously, are interpreted .To learn more, we need patience to listen . We can learn to listen, but we have to admit the way in which we do it now and what is needed. If we pay attention to the way in which we listen, especially our own thoughts and feelings, we will start to identify “our contribution”, our own projections introduced in the communication process. To really listen means to understand how much our present experience is owed to the present, information from this moment and how much to the past, information from memory “filters” (desires, perceptions, predispositions) through which we perceive reality. These filters determine us to not see reality s it is and to not respond to stimulations in a new manner, but in an old one, determined by the past experience. From here appears the necessity to learn to listen/ perceive the objective reality, in opposition with the mental agitation coming from memory, the need to distinguish between the inferences we make regarding our actual experience and the experience itself, objective. Chris Argyris (1974) from Harvard suggested that we do not make the difference between direct experience and own evaluations about this, that our own conclusions depend more on the past experience than the new one.

Most of us understand how important it is to prepare for communication, meaning to talk, but few realize how important it is to prepare to learn to listen. We are starting from the premises that listening is something natural, everybody knows to listen. Also, we consider that the listening activity is a passive one, it does not imply participation, and it is a natural process. When we are trying to really listen something or someone, we find this thing extremely hard, because we always project our ideas and opinions, prejudices, tendency and impulses; when these dominate, than we will listen with difficulty what is to be said. Someone can listen and learn (these two processes are tied) only if attentive, a state of calm, waiting or temporary suspending your own mental projections. Only in such a state a real communication can be made- we must consciously induce such a state in which communication can take place. This thing is not easy to do, but we can learn ways to change these automat habits. In order to achieve the active listening, we must be able to be aware of our own thoughts and feelings, to listen to us and only that we will be able to listen to others. The lack of listening abilities, of attention determines, more than anything else, the appearance of misunderstandings. Active listening is a habit, ability and it represents the base if an efficient communication. A good listener/communicator tries to totally understand what a person says. At the end, even if he will disagree, before this, he wants to know and understand what it is about.

### ***Active listening - a method of improving*** ***intercultural communication***

Active listening is a special ability to respond in a manner which facilitates communication and through which you can agree with thoughts and feelings

expressed; it involves the attempt to hear what the speaker said, from his point of view. In other words, it is a way of listening and answering to the person you are communicating with, a method which seeks to improve mutual understanding (structural form of listening and answer, which involves focusing the attention on the speaker; to listen involves an active commitment). Often, when they are speaking, people “half listen” what others say, thinking, at the same time, at something else, and then they are bound to a conflict, people are more preoccupied by forming answers about what they think than at what the other one said.

The benefits of active listening:

- it “obliges /forces“you attentively listen to the others;
- leads to avoiding misunderstandings;
- allows adopting an opened attitude which stimulates the other one to say/communicate more;
- leads to avoiding communication blocks and facilitates solving problems.

As a technique of improving receiving information through full attention given to the speaker, active listening encourages the other one to talk, assuring the interlocutor’s understanding. Active listening involves a permanent and aware exercise, through which changing messages is avoided, and also, respond behaviors of closing type and through which old habits of listening are eliminated (to pretend to be attentive out of politeness, listening only to facts or changing the channels in the middle of a conversation when the discussion is hard to understand, on the principle according to which we can “come back “in the conversation, a wrong thing).

Observable elements of active listening-indicators:

- open body language: face towards the partner, body slightly curved forward, without crosses arms or legs;
- facial expressions: to approve /shake your head affirmative, eye contact, smile;
- clarification questions: What would this thing mean? And what happened then?
- paraphrasing: So that is what happened? I heard if I got it right, that you said...
- bringing to discussion the partner’s feelings/emotions: You seem upset by this...I could tell that you are really upset.

In active listening, the most important thing is to remember not necessarily what you have to do, but what you must not do: give advice, suggestions, and solutions, tell your own problems, interrupt or change the subject. The main dimensions of the active listening process:

1. What are you doing?-body language;
2. What and how you say it? -words, phrases, tonality.

#### Studies on active listening:

- setting a relationship- the listener is kind, welcoming, assuring an open frame, comfortable, friendly, sure from the point of view of confidentiality, communication must not be interrupted;
- Encouraging the speaker to talk – through an open attitude and receptive to his words and personality, avoiding the communication barriers; using certain encouraging or strengthening interjections, the fact that the interlocutor is carefully listened, nonverbal language, there are many ways of encouraging the interlocutor to talk;
- reflecting the received message through paraphrasing gives the speaker the certainty that he is listened;
- encouraging the speaker to find his own solutions – in active listening, the receptor's role is to create a proper atmosphere to an approach between speaker and his own ideas and feelings, it is very important that the speaker to be the one who takes the decisions, chooses the solution, without being influenced by the receptor;
- summary and communication conclusions- communication must be ended as a summary and some conclusions.

#### *Conclusions*

It is more important to habitude the competence of intercultural communication than to get only the knowledge referring to different cultures, because at ant time new situations can appear and stereotypes and prejudices must be avoided. The competence of intercultural communication requires understanding the way in which culture influences the expectations, behavior and ability to recognize and use cultural differences as resources in learning and solving problems in different contexts, and the capacity of being aware of you and using communication abilities and techniques in general.

Every situation of interaction /intercultural communication is unique and, as a consequence, there are no standard solutions or methods. In such situations, people should reply to three questions:

1. How do I present my communication situation?
2. What would I like to accomplish/realize in this situation? What are my purposes?

3. What actions do I intend in order to fulfill my goals?

Through answering to these questions, we can understand how our cultural repertory influences perceptions and behavior and gives us the possibility to review the way in which we present the situation in purposes and action strategy. The intercultural communication competence implies developing an attitude that would fit in different cultural contexts.

The main difficulties can appear in the situations of intercultural communication:

1. Good intentions are not enough, practice is needed.
2. It is easier to say that you can adapt to a new context than to do so.
3. It is a great difference between knowing what you must do and acting right in practice

The stages you must take into consideration when you are in a situation of intercultural communication refer to the following aspects:

1. Remember the filters: we hear /perceive through our own filters, fact which distorts reality.
2. Listen like a witness- use the active listening techniques.
3. Make clear: before speaking, make sure that you understood what the other one is trying to say.
4. Reform: "I think you meant... is that right?"...until your partner agrees that you understood him.
5. Take a break before talking: ask yourself what are you following
6. Identify the cultural sources of misunderstanding:" in your culture/country, is this important problem? Or "In your culture/ country how would it be expected to react in such a situation?"
7. Identify the possible solutions: "What are you suggesting it should be done? How should we act?"
8. At the end, summarize and make clear the initial purposes and conclusions.
9. Check possible misunderstandings

### *Selective biography*

Abric, Jean-Claude (2002), *Psihologia comunicării: teorii și metode*, Ed. Polirom.

Anghel, Petre (2003), *Stiluri și metode de comunicare*, Ed. Aramis.

- Argyris, Chris (1982), *Reasoning, Learning, and Action, Individual and Organizational*, Jossey-Bass Pub.
- Berthoin, Arianne; Friedman, Victor (2003), *Learning to Negotiate Reality: A Strategy for Teaching Intercultural Competencies*, WZB.
- Bowman, Sharon (1998), *I See What You Say! Active Listening Skills Practice*, Training and Performance Sourcebook.
- Chiru, Irena (2003), *Comunicarea interpersonală*, Ed. Tritonic.
- Cooper, Catherine; Denner, Jill (1998), *Theories Linking Culture and Psychology: Universal and Community Specific Processes*, Annu. Rev. Psychol.
- Hofstede, G. (1996), *Managementul structurilor multiculturale*, Ed. Economică.
- Huber-Kriegler, Martina; Lazar, Ildiko; Strange, John (2003), *Mirrors and Windows, An Intercultural Communication Textbook*, Council of Europe, May.
- Quach, Xuan; Jones, Anna (2002), *Intercultural Communication*, Teaching and Learning Unit.
- Saunders, Richard (2004), *Intercultural Communication Workbook*, Shasta College.
- Stoy, Dianne; Wild, Hennifer (1998), *The Ladder of Inference: Increasing Cross-Cultural Understanding*, Training and Performance Sourcebook.