
CONCEPTUAL APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF CULTURE



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ABSTRACT

This article is dedicated on indigenous and cultural, cross-cultural approaches which studies demographic and ethnographic sphere and cross-cultural obtain data in two or more cultures making the assumption that the constructs under investigation are universals which exist in all of the cultures studied. The variety of religions and languages present in the world today offers ample evidence that if anything human kind loves diversity.

Keywords: *ethnolinguistics, linguoculturology, anthropology, indigenous and cultural approaches, etics, emics, synchronical, generalizability, validity, paradigm.*

Globalization has led to increased interconnectedness among nations and we are much more interdependent than we were in the past. This interdependence requires us to work with people from different cultures, and it also requires many of us to live in cultures far away and quite different from our own. Despite the similarities offered by technology and urban centres, differences persist, and the vision of a homogeneous world is quite unlikely and perhaps flawed. The variety of religions and languages present in the world today offers ample evidence that if anything human kind loves diversity. So we need to prepare ourselves to have a meaningful dialogue with people from different cultures to help each other solve our problems and also to learn from each other.

V.V. Vorobiev in his monograph “Linguistics: Theory and Methods” offers the following definition: “cultural linguistics is the synthesizing complex scientific discipline, studying the relationship and interaction of culture and language” [Vorobyov V. V. 1997: 76]. In Telia’s opinion linguoculturology studies communicative processes in synchronical relationships with ethnical mentality. The most essential notions are culture specific units, cultural concepts and national world picture [Telia V.N.2008:96].

V. A. Maslova defines cultural linguistics as a branch of linguistics which is based on cultural studies; as a humanitarian discipline that studies the material and spiritual culture that has been embodied in the national language and that appears in the linguistic processes. One of the new anthropologically oriented disciplines in the current research is linguoculturology. This discipline is of a synthesizing type and deals with the description of cultural and moral experience and ethnic mentality that are represented in a language by special cultural components in the meaning of language units. Under cultural linguistics V.A. Maslova also suggests “the integrative field of knowledge, absorbing the results of research in cultural studies and linguistics, ethnolinguistics and cultural anthropology” [Maslova V. A. 2001:38]

According to Triandis (2000), research that studies culture and, more specifically, cross-cultural and intercultural communication in its various forms and social contexts, can approach the theoretical foundations and methodological design of their work from three different perspectives: the indigenous one, the cultural one and the cross-cultural one.

The "indigenous" approach focuses on the meaning of concepts in a culture and how such meaning may change across demographics within a given culture context. The focus of such studies is the development of knowledge tailored to a specific culture without any special claims to generality beyond the confines of that particular cultural context. The main challenge with the indigenous approach is the difficulty involved in trying to avoid the influence of pre-given concepts, theories and methodologies and therefore the difficulty of determining what the term indigenous really means in any given culture.

The "cultural" approach is used to describe those studies which make special use of ethnographic methods. More traditional experimental methods can also be used in conjunction within this approach. Here again the meanings of constructs in a culture are the main focus of attention and there is little of direct comparison of constructs across cultures. The aim is to advance the understanding of the individual in a sociocultural context and to emphasize the importance of culture in understanding his or her behavior. The challenge with this approach is a lack of a widely accepted research methodology [Adamopolous & Lonner, 2001:12].

Triandis (2000) states that, when using "cross-cultural" approaches, studies obtain data in two or more cultures making the assumption that the constructs under investigation are universals which exist in all of the cultures studied. One positive point about this approach is that it purports to offer an increased understanding of the

cross-cultural validity and generalizability of the theories and constructs under investigation. The main challenge, however, comes from the need to demonstrate the equivalence of the constructs and measures used, and to minimize the evident biases that may threaten valid cross-cultural comparisons. Thus not only does the researcher conceptualize and operationalize, but also, and in addition, the differential factor is taken into account, that is to say, the way in which one and the same construct functions in a variety of different cultures [Casmir, Fred 1993:408].

Indigenous and cultural approaches focus on emics, or the things which are unique to a given culture. These approaches are relativistic in that their aim is the in-depth study of the local context and the meaning of constructs without imposing a priori definitions on the constructs themselves [Tanaka-Matsumi, 2001:265].

Scholars working within these approaches usually reject claims that the theories they work with are universal. On the other hand, in the cross-cultural approach the focus is on etics, or factors that are universal across cultures. Here the goal is to understand similarities and differences across cultures, and the comparability of cross-cultural categories or dimensions is emphasized).

Summing up, emics focus on "the native's point of view"; etics focus on the "comparative cross-cultural point of view." Emics and etics are perhaps the two most crucial constructs in the study of culture [Bhawuk & Triandis, 1996: 463].

TRIANDIS' classification, and the references to "emic" and "etic" questions remind us that "Malinowski's dilemma" is still as valid today as it ever was, and that the tensions between "cultural specificities" and "universal-general" continue to remain a challenge for the qualitative approach, and an even greater one, if that is possible, in the area of cross-cultural communication.

Having presented the conceptualization of culture in studies of cross-cultural communication, and examined how the issue of culture is handled in these studies we will now pass on to another key aspect of the relationship between culture and qualitative research into cross cultural communication, and that is how culture makes its presence felt in the process of qualitative research.

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