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5 Issues in intercultural communication: A semantic network analysis

Abstract: This chapter describes a number of critical issues facing the field of intercultural communication including, the discipline's definition, power relations among various ethnic or national groups and nation-states, voice – who speaks for an ethnic group or nation-state, and globalization. But the major portion of the chapter takes a different approach to discussing the issues facing intercultural communication. Rather than focusing on what topics, areas of study, or issues (theoretical and pragmatic) the idealized field of international/intercultural communication should concentrate on, it describes the topics that it has examined in the published articles in those journals devoted to the subject over the last fifteen years. It employs a semantic network analysis of the abstracts of articles to answer the questions, “What nations/cultures have intercultural scholars examined?” and “What topics or issues have intercultural communication scholars investigated?” By doing so, we define the field and the issues it faces in the future.

Keywords: power, voice, globalization, semantic network analysis

1 Introduction

Past discussions of the issues facing international and intercultural communication have focused on problems including, what constitutes this area of study, by defining culture and differentiating inter-cultural communication from cross-cultural comparisons of phenomena indicative of the process of communication (Barnett & Lee 2002). *Intercultural* communication involves the exchange of information between two groups of people with significantly different cultures, while *international* communication focuses on the exchange of messages between nation-states (Barnett 1999). *Cross-cultural* communication research concentrates on the comparison of cultural groups, how they differ in terms of communication behavior, and their implications for the process of communication (Gudykunst 2002). *International media* and global communication research is primarily concerned with the mass media, either print (international journalism) or electronic (broadcast and digital telecommunication – telephones and the Internet) (Golan, Johnson & Wanta 2010; Shoemaker & Cohen 2006). It generally compares national media infrastructures, the philosophy of media regulation, and differential patterns of use and effects and their implications for the society in which they are embedded (Hallin & Mancini 2006, 2011; Hudson 1997; van Dijk 2012).

The international/intercultural communication literature is full of numerous ideological issues, most prominent of which is the concern with relations of power among various ethnic or national groups and nation-states (Braman 2002; Castells 2004; Shi-xu, 2004), which is often based on the ownership of the media and the infrastructure connecting it as a global network (Barnett, Ruiz & Park 2015; Ruiz & Barnett 2015). The current intercultural communication literature functions partly to perpetuate power relations between the West and non-West (Kim 2010), since scholars frequently use Euro-American cultures and values as standards to measure the behavioral and material layers of non-European cultures, especially the East Asian cultures (Fougere & Moulettes 2007; Miike 2003 & 2009). As a result, intercultural scholars often ignore alternative perspectives.

Two prominent theories of international communication are World Systems Theory (Barnett, Jacobson, Choi & Sun Miller 1996; Chase-Dunn & Grimes 1995; Wallerstein 1974) and Galtung's (1971) Structural Theory of Imperialism. World Systems Theory argues that the global economy is characterized by an unequal exchange of material, capital and labor, as well as information, between the rich powerful nations (North America, Western Europe and certain countries of East Asia) and the poor countries of the globe. It argues that nations are interdependent and that their development (a subject often investigated by intercultural scholars) can only be understood by taking into account the ways in which societies are linked with one another in the context of material, capital and information exchanges. Specifically related to intercultural communication is the production and distribution of messages, which is dominated by the countries in the core. For example, it has only been since the relatively recent economic development of China, which has moved it toward the core, that its role in defeating the Japanese in World War II has been fully acknowledged and widely communicated. These include not only the media – news (Kim & Barnett 1996), film (Chon, Barnett & Choi 2003), music (Moon, Barnett & Lim 2010), patents and trademarks (Nam & Barnett 2011), but also, education (Barnett, et al. 2015) and interpersonal communication (Barnett & Benefield 2015; Barnett & Choi 1995). Further, these relations are politically enforced. The rich countries use their military and other mechanisms to coerce the poorer countries to maintain these inequitable relations.

World System Theory has a number of implications for the examination of international/intercultural communication. One, the position of a country in the network of international relations determines its potential for development, and its interaction patterns with the rest of the world. Two, the structural position of a country is a result of its interactions with other countries. And three, the relationships among nations are relatively stable, changing only as the distribution of the modes of production changes; for example, from an agricultural based economy to an industrial one or from a industrial to an information society.

Related to World System Theory is Galtung's (1971) Structural Theory of Imperialism, which proposes four rules defining the structure of international communi-

cation. 1. International communication is vertical between center (the wealthy) and peripheral (poor) nations. 2. Interaction between peripheral nations is missing. 3. Multilateral interaction involving all three is missing. And, 4. interaction with the outside world is monopolized by the center. In other words, “there is interaction along the spokes, from the periphery to the center hub; but not along the rim, from periphery nation to one another” (p. 97). In other words, international communication is radial, not integrated.

These theories explicitly discuss the issue of power as it applies to international and intercultural communication. Intercultural communication scholars have largely ignored these theories. Critical scholars have discussed power relations in international communication (Deibert 2002; McChesney 2001; Mosco 1996), but their research has not greatly influenced the research by intercultural communication scholars, which has primarily focused on how the culture in which the individuals are embedded impacts the process of communication. This is an important issue for the future of intercultural communication scholarship.

Still another issue concerns “voice”. Who speaks for an ethnic group or nation-state (Connor 1978; Eriksen 1997; Hall 1997; Kearney 1991)? The marginality of individuals engaged in intercultural communication (who are accessible subjects for studies) raises the issue of the validity of cross-cultural communication research. Because of their inter-group ties, these individuals may not be representative of their own group’s culture. Individuals who occupy the role of bridges between cultures tend to be peripheral (less integrated) in their own groups. The reason is that dense groups regulate intergroup flows and the existence of bridges because its members’ resources are used to maintain intragroup ties. As a result, individuals strongly connected within a group tend not to be bridges to other cultural groups. Thus, individuals with links to other groups often are marginal in their own groups and they may not act as the voice of that group (Barnett & Lee 2002).

Native people in positions of power (government officials, businessmen, academics or clerics) are typically taken to be the subjects studied by intercultural communication researchers. This is especially true when investigating international media content where their voice is heard above all others. These individuals tend to be wealthier, more highly educated, urban, and importantly, more cosmopolitan than the typical member of society. Thus, they may not express values, attitudes and opinions, as well as typical communication behaviors more representative of the society under investigation. Intercultural researchers should strive to listen to alternative voices that may be representative of society at large including different sectors and groups, be they poor, uneducated and be tied to local, often rural settings.

Globalization, the process of strengthening social relations (connections) among distant localities has increased the interactions among the people of the world creating networks of interdependence at multi-continental distances. These networks can be flows and influences of capital and goods, cultural information

and ideas, as well as, environmentally and biologically relevant substances (Keohane & Nye 2000). Due to increased transportation and telecommunications between any two points on the globe, the prospect exists for creating a communication network that links everyone in the world. Globalization has resulted in what Karl Deutsch (1966) called a “Web of Nations”, Marshall McLuhan (1966), the “Global Village”, Immanuel Wallerstein (1974) and others the “World System.” Manuel Castells (2000) and Jan van Dijk (2012) simply call it the “Network Society”. One consequence of globalization has been that through the increase in international communication, the differences among cultures have become smaller. The earth’s diverse societies are in the process of converging, homogenizing into one world civilization (Barnett & Kincaid 1983; Barnett & Rosen 2007; Kincaid, Yum, Woelfel & Barnett 1983; Rogers & Kincaid 1981) or at least forming hybrid cultures combining elements of many different groups and nationalities (Straubhaar 2002), for example, the formation of the United World College, the world trade organization, the United Nations, and the McDonalidization of the human society (Ritzer 1996).

This chapter takes a different approach to the treatment of the problems facing intercultural communication. Rather than focusing on what topics, areas of study, or issues (theoretical and pragmatic) the idealized field of international/intercultural communication should concentrate its attention on, it provides a comprehensive description of the subjects that intercultural communication research has examined in the published articles in those peer reviewed journals devoted to the field over the last decade and a half. It employs the tools of semantic network analysis to analyze the abstracts of research articles on the topic to answer the question, “What topics or issues have intercultural communication scholars investigated?”, thus defining the field and the issues it faces in the future.

2 A semantic network analysis of intercultural communication

2.1 Theory and methods

This section of the chapter describes a computer-assisted semantic network analysis that was conducted to analyze abstracts of articles obtained from the Web of Science (WS), Journal of Intercultural Communication (JIC), Journal of Intercultural Communication Research (JICR), and Journal of International and Intercultural Communication (JIIC) from 1992 to April 2015. JIC, JICR, and JIIC are added being not included in the database of WS. In WS, the earliest intercultural communication research article with a downloadable abstract in the category of Communication was published in 1992. The earliest article in the online database of JIC was published in 1999; the earliest article in the online database of JICR was published in 2006; and the earliest article in the online database of JIIC was published in

2008. Using the phrase “intercultural communication” as search string, 155 articles were selected from the category of *Communication* in WS (1992–April 2015); 241 articles were selected from JIC (1999–Feb 2015); 138 articles were selected from JICR (2006–Feb 2015); 118 articles were selected from JIIC (2008–Feb 2015). In order to determine the topics or issues that intercultural/international communication scholars have examined and therefore deemed important over the last two decades, a total of 652 abstracts of these articles were extracted for semantic network analysis. Abstracts were chosen rather than keywords or entire articles because they provide precise summaries of the research without the unnecessary methodological or ideological details and redundancies of entire articles.

Semantic network analysis (SMA) is a form of content analysis that identifies the network of associations between concepts expressed in text (Doerfel 1998; Carley & Palmquist 1992). By conducting a computer-assisted SMA, complex associations between concepts can be found, salient concepts in specified relations can be identified, and the text can be displayed as visible maps, helping researchers to investigate implicit meaning of the text. The ConText software (Diesner et al. 2013) was used to generate semantic networks based on the measurement of concept co-occurrence. Specifically, syntactically functional words such as articles, adverbs and transitive verbs were removed, tense was adjusted and different forms of the same word were combined into the root form of the word (Kwon, Barnett & Chen 2009). For example, *communicate/communication/communicative*, *cultural/culturally/culture*, were regarded as the same concept. Some words were combined together as one concept. For example, Middle East was regarded as one concept and labeled as *ME*. Two semantic networks were created: One is a geography network, which identified nations that co-occurred in the text, that is, countries that were studied together, either for comparison purposes or whose intercultural relations were examined. Subcultures or ethnic groups within any individual country were not examined. The other is a co-occurrence network of the most frequent concepts, which describes the topics or issues that international/intercultural communication scholars have focused on in published research.

For the geography network, 40 geographic locations that occurred at least twice in the 652 abstracts were selected. This included 32 nations, three continents (Africa, Asia, Europe), two regions (The Middle East, Scandinavia), Hawaii, Guam, and Hong Kong (as separate from China). ConText automatically found all location pairs among the 40 geographic locations within an individual abstract. Each location pair was given an equal connection weight regardless of how far apart (the number of words between terms) the political entities were in the abstract (Danowski 1993). For the co-occurrence network of the most frequent concepts, ConText listed the most frequent concepts in 652 abstracts. The 100 most frequent concepts with substantive meaning were chosen for analysis. Concept pairs among the 100 most frequent words that occurred within seven concepts of each other in an individual abstract were considered connected regardless of the number of words separating the terms.

The two semantic networks were run through *UCINET* (Borgatti, Everett & Freeman 2002), *Gephi* (Bastian, Heymann & Jacomy 2009), and *R*, which are software and a language for network analysis, graphics, and statistical computing. *UCINET* calculates the centralities of each concept. Although, there are a number of different measures of centrality, including degree, betweenness, and eigenvector centrality, this study used eigenvector centrality as the criterion measure since it indicates a concept's overall network centrality (Bonacich 1972). *UCINET* also calculates the share, the proportion of all links attributable to each individual concept. *Gephi* creates visual maps of semantic networks. In the visual maps (Figure 5.1 & 5.2). The size of the label of each concept depends on its eigenvector centrality, such that the larger the object, the more central a country or concept is to intercultural/international communication research. Lines in the maps indicate the presence of a relationship between each pair of countries or concepts. Thicker lines represent stronger relationship between two concepts. Also, the shorter distance between two concepts, the stronger relationship there is between them. *R* calculates the clusters of the networks using the Package *igraph* (Csardi & Nepusz 2006), which is based on Newman's modularity clustering algorithm (Newman 2006).

2.2 The geography of intercultural communication research

Figure 5.1 illustrates the network of intercultural communication research based on geography. Overall, the United States ($c^1 = 86.54$) is the most central country in the network, with a 19.1% share, followed by China ($c = 65.34$, $s^2 = 7.7\%$), Japan ($c = 51.75$, $s = 7.7\%$), and South Korea ($c = 31.42$, $s = 4.9\%$). This means that almost 20% of published intercultural/international research considers the United States or one of these three countries. The normalized eigenvector centralities of these four countries are all greater than twice of the mean normalized eigenvector centrality ($M = 14$, $SD = 17.66$). Thus, the central focus of intercultural/international research concerns the United States and the East Asian countries of China, Japan and South Korea. The results of the Newman's modularity analysis reveal that this network is composed of four major clusters. On the visual map (Figure 5.1), the cluster number was marked next to the label of the concept. The different clusters are represented by different colors.

The first group (in red) is the largest and represents the network core. It is centered about the *USA* with China, Japan, South Korea, Hong Kong, Thailand, Turkey, Iraq, Taiwan, Sweden, India, Israel, Australia, Germany, Singapore, Chile, Mexico, Hawaii, Malaysia, Romania, and Norway. China had the closest relationship with the USA ($n^3 = 13$), followed by Japan ($n = 8$), South Korea ($n = 5$), Iraq

1 "c" represents normalized eigenvector centrality.

2 "s" represents share of the concept.

3 "n" represents number of links between two concepts.

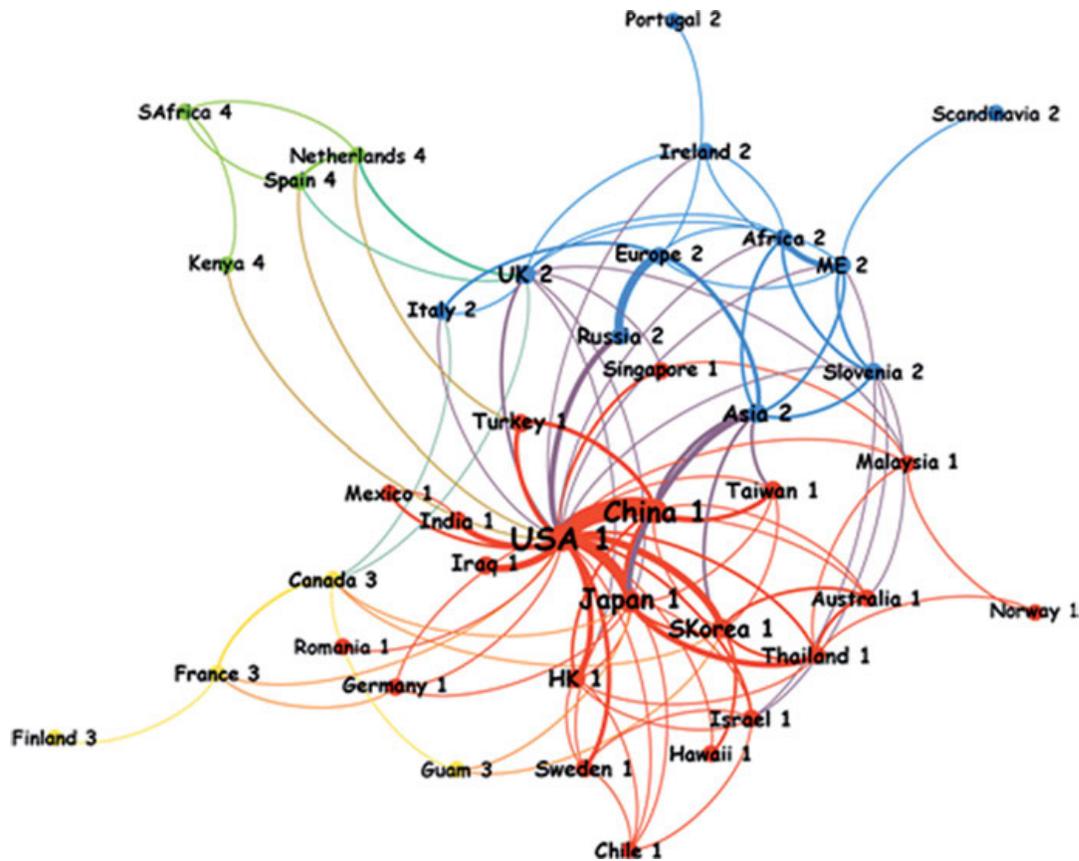


Fig. 5.1: Geography network of intercultural communication research.

($n = 5$), Hong Kong ($n = 4$), and India ($n = 4$). In this group, the East Asian countries are closely associated (i.e. China-Taiwan $n = 3$; China-Japan $n = 3$; China-Hong Kong $n = 2$; China-South Korea $n = 1$; Japan-South Korea $n = 2$; Japan-Hong Kong $n = 1$, South Korea-Taiwan $n = 1$). The second group (in blue) is centered about *Asia*, *Middle East*, *Africa*, and *Europe*, with Russia, UK, Slovenia, Italy, Ireland, Scandinavia, and Portugal. *Asia* also has a close association with *Japan* ($n = 4$), *China* ($n = 3$), *South Korea* ($n = 2$), and *Taiwan* ($n = 2$) in the first group. The third group (in yellow) is centered about *Canada* and *France*, with Guam and Finland; and the fourth (in green), about *South Africa*, with Spain, Kenya, and Netherlands. Group 3 and 4 are on the periphery of the network. Table 5.1 shows the normalized eigenvector centrality and share for all 40 geographic locations. Eigenvalue centrality was normalized by taking the scaled value and dividing it by the maximum difference possible expressed as a percentage.

Tab. 5.1: Location centrality in the network of intercultural communication research.

Location	nEigen	Share (%)	Location	nEigen	Share (%)
Africa	8.99	0.030	Middle East	9.47	0.036
Asia	24.20	0.052	Malaysia	5.40	0.013
Australia	11.06	0.018	Mexico	7.85	0.008
Canada	4.75	0.018	Netherlands	2.25	0.015
Chile	7.80	0.013	Norway	1.09	0.005
China	65.34	0.077	Portugal	0.35	0.003
Europe	8.39	0.040	Romania	3.62	0.003
Finland	0.18	0.003	Russia	16.57	0.026
France	4.38	0.013	South Korea	31.42	0.049
Germany	8.69	0.010	South Africa	0.43	0.008
Guam	3.67	0.008	Scandinavia	0.39	0.003
Hong Kong	24.96	0.031	Singapore	7.99	0.010
Hawaii	6.24	0.008	Slovenia	8.15	0.023
India	14.80	0.013	Spain	4.36	0.013
Iraq	18.09	0.013	Sweden	14.90	0.018
Ireland	4.929	0.010	Taiwan	17.31	0.021
Israel	12.14	0.021	Thailand	20.75	0.034
Italy	5.059	0.013	Turkey	19.14	0.018
Japan	51.75	0.077	UK	12.76	0.036
Kenya	3.64	0.005	USA	86.54	0.191

Mean = 14.00, S.D. = 17.66

2.3 The concepts of intercultural communication research

In the co-occurrence network of most frequent concepts used in intercultural communication research, *communication* ($c = 69.21$, $s = 6.5\%$), *culture* ($c = 63.19$, $s = 6.8\%$), and *intercultural* ($c = 53.93$, $s = 4.1\%$) are the most central concepts. The normalized eigenvector centralities of these three concepts were all greater than seven times of the mean normalized eigenvector centrality ($M = 6.83$, $SD = 8.7$). A graphic representation of the network is presented in Figure 5.2, illustrating the most central concepts dealing with intercultural communication research. In order to clearly demonstrate the semantic structure of intercultural communication research, the three most common terms, *Communication*, *Culture*, and *Intercultural* were removed from the network, because they distorted the results by linking all the other concepts together into a single group of terms that dealt with intercultural communication, the topic under investigation. The minimum link strength (frequency of co-occurrence) required for a line was 14.19, which was the mean (3.21) plus 2 standard deviations (5.49). The most central concept in the graph is *American* ($c = 57.06$, $s = 7.6\%$), followed by *student*, *relationship*, *language*, *difference*, *group*, *Chinese*, and *identity*. *American* has the closest relationship with *student* ($n = 127$). *Student* is also tightly associated with *international* ($n = 95$), *university* ($n =$

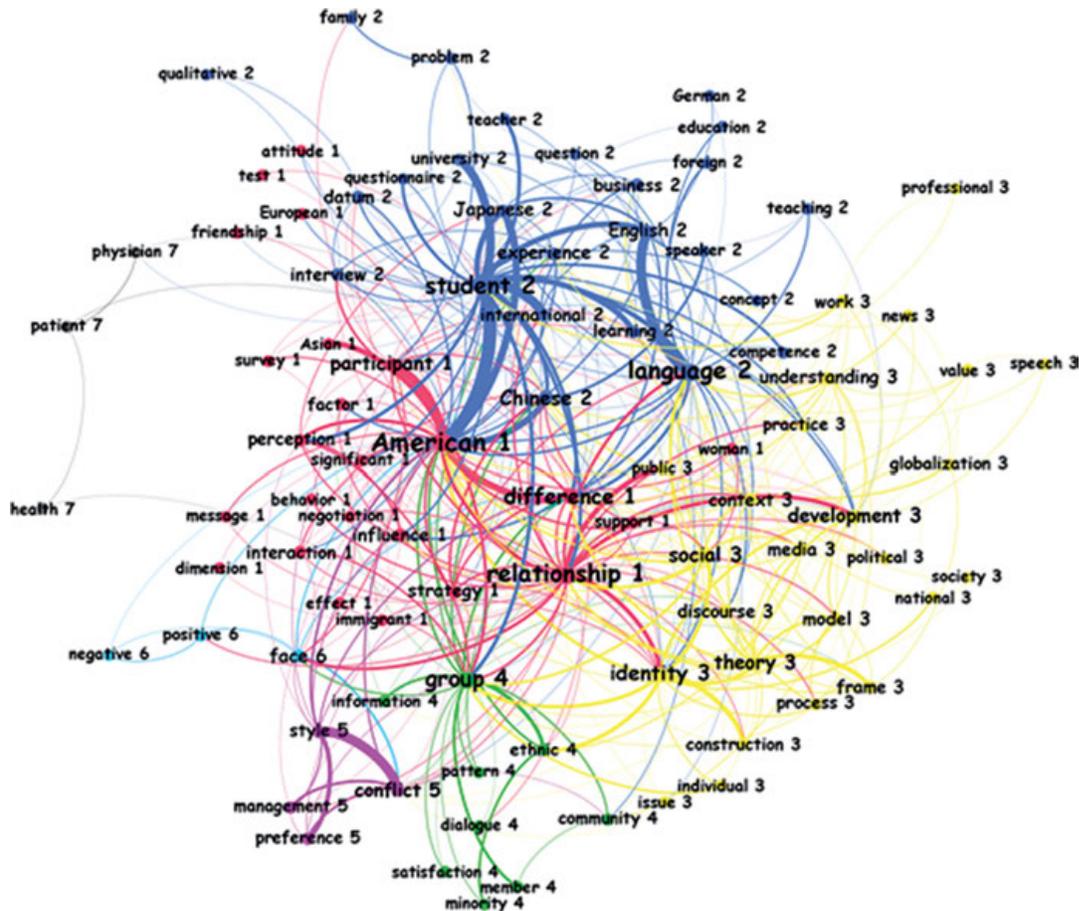


Fig. 5.2: The co-occurrence network of concepts used in intercultural communication research.

88), *Japanese*, ($n = 62$) *English* ($n = 61$), and *Chinese* ($n = 44$). *Relationship*, *language*, and *difference* are all closely associated with *American* and *student*. The results of the Newman's modularity analysis show that the graph is composed of seven major clusters. On the visual map (Figure 5.2), the cluster number was marked next to the label of the concept and differentiated by color.

The first group (in red) is centered about *American*, *relationship*, and *difference*. It has a close relationship with the second group (in blue), which is centered about *student* and *language*, indicating a great deal of intercultural communication research is related to the comparison between American students and those from other countries. The third group (yellow) is centered about *identity*, *development*, and *theory*, which closely associated with *relationship* in the second group ($n = 50$; 50; 33). It demonstrates scholars' efforts in developing identity theory in the study of the relationship involved in intercultural communication. The fourth group (green) is centered about *group* and *ethnic*, which is closely associated with *identity* in group 3 ($n = 44$; 64) and *American* in group 1 ($n = 29$; 29). This illustrates the prominent position of studying American ethnic identity in intercultural communication research. Group 5, 6, and 7 were on the periphery of the network. Group 5

(magenta) studies different conflict styles performed by different cultural and ethnic groups. It is composed of *conflict*, *style*, *management*, and *preference*. Group 6 (light blue) is composed of *face*, *positive*, and *negative*, studying different forms of politeness in different cultural and ethnic context. Group 7 (gray) addresses issues of health communication in different cultures, including *physician*, *patient*, and *health*. Table 5.2 shows the normalized eigenvector centrality and share of the concepts in Figure 5.2.

Tab. 5.2: Centrality of most frequent concepts used in the network of intercultural communication research.

Concept	nEigen	Share %	Concept	nEigen	Share %	Concept	nEigen	Share %
American	57.06	0.076	Globalization	2.83	0.007	Positive	4.49	0.004
Asian	8.1	0.004	Group	29.49	0.043	Practice	6.98	0.006
Attitude	3.61	0.002	Health	0.91	0.002	Preference	4.14	0.007
Behavior	3.48	0.002	Identity	25.20	0.036	Problem	3.60	0.005
Business	9.79	0.01	Immigrant	5.24	0.004	Process	7.53	0.008
Chinese	25.93	0.027	Individual	3.65	0.004	Professional	1.37	0.002
Community	3.61	0.005	Influence	14.98	0.013	Public	7.09	0.005
Competence	7.33	0.005	Information	5.58	0.004	Qualitative	0.75	0.002
Concept	3.12	0.002	Interaction	11.31	0.009	Question	3.39	0.003
Conflict	13.31	0.018	International	19.58	0.014	Questionnaire	7.40	0.004
Construction	8.07	0.007	Interview	11.52	0.010	Relationship	39.33	0.055
Context	11.43	0.012	Issue	3.19	0.003	Satisfaction	2.33	0.002
Datum	11.5	0.009	Japanese	23.57	0.017	Significant	10.51	0.007
Development	15.94	0.021	Language	36.37	0.053	Social	22.97	0.025
Dialogue	1.97	0.002	Learning	10.59	0.009	Society	1.90	0.002
Difference	32.26	0.036	Management	5.15	0.006	Speaker	5.57	0.005
Dimension	2.88	0.001	Media	10.03	0.011	Speech	1.79	0.002
Discourse	11.37	0.01	Member	2.05	0.002	Strategy	16.40	0.014
Education	3.2	0.002	Message	3.10	0.002	Student	53.89	0.069
Effect	4.056	0.002	Minority	1.61	0.002	Style	11.51	0.014
English	22.37	0.02	Model	10.99	0.013	Support	9.68	0.007
Ethnic	9.79	0.009	National	2.73	0.003	Survey	5.44	0.003
European	4.34	0.002	Negative	2.29	0.002	Teacher	5.66	0.004
Experience	15.66	0.014	Negotiation	4.31	0.004	Teaching	4.81	0.004
Face	12.88	0.014	News	2.24	0.003	Test	3.40	0.002
Factor	8.7	0.006	Participant	24.86	0.025	Theory	20.00	0.026
Family	1.01	0.002	Patient	0.94	0.002	Understanding	10.24	0.012
Foreign	3.91	0.002	Pattern	2.53	0.002	University	14.79	0.009
Frame	8.3	0.01	Perception	16.86	0.013	Value	3.32	0.004
Friendship	3.52	0.002	Physician	2.27	0.002	Woman	5.07	0.004
German	1.74	0.002	Political	4.11	0.004	Work	7.29	0.008

Mean = 6.83, S.D. = 8.70

3 Discussion – Implications of the semantic networks for intercultural communication

3.1 The United States centered intercultural communication research

In the academic field of intercultural communication, the United States has occupied an unchallenged predominance, not surprising given the beginning of intercultural communication research being at the Foreign Service Institute under the U.S. federal government (Leeds-Hurwitz 1990). The early intercultural communication research typically compared communication processes in the U.S. with a single country that was very often located in East Asia (Kim 2010). In particular, there are more studies of American/Japanese communication than of intercultural communication between any two other cultures since the United States and Japan were the two largest economic powers in the world with a high volume of trade and personnel exchanges between them (Ito 1992, Rogers, Hart & Miike 2002). The geography network of intercultural communication research (Figure 5.1) confirmed some of the findings of the above studies. The USA is at the center of the network closely linked to the Asian countries (i.e. China, Japan, South Korea, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and India). However, China is the second most central country in the geography network, and compared to Japan, it has a closer relationship with the USA, indicating that American/Chinese communication has become the central concern of intercultural communication research. This can be explained, in part, from the perspective of economic development. Since 2010, China has surpassed Japan as the world's second-largest economy (Hosaka 2010), and the relationship between the USA and China, the current world's two largest economies, is crucial to the future development of the world economy. Also, from the perspective of international student exchanges, China sends the most number of students abroad, and a majority of international students from China are studying in English-speaking countries, particularly the USA (Barnett, Lee, Jiang & Park 2015). Chinese graduate students studying in the USA tend to examine China's relations with and differences from the United States. Kim (2010) has argued that more countries need to be involved into the intercultural communication research to reduce the bias of always comparing the USA with a single East Asian country. Indeed, this is an important issue facing the future of intercultural communication when considering the ecological validity and the generalizability of research findings to societies other than the United States and East Asia.

The geography network revealed regional clusters of intercultural communication research. The East Asian countries were associated with each other indicating the examination of cultural variability within East Asia, a region that was often treated in the literature as homogeneous, and painted with the same broad brush as collectivistic, the opposite of America's individualistic culture (Hofstede & Min-

kov 2010; Kim 2010). Scholars also have explored the intercultural communication among countries in Asia, Europe, Africa, and Middle East. Besides expanding intercultural communication research on a global scale, it is still very important to study the communication between the USA and individual East Asian countries, which are distinctively different. These difference have lead Huntington⁴ (1996) to categorize China and Japan as members of different civilizations. With the rapid growth of the economic power of the East Asian countries, the studies of the dialogues between the holistic view (Chen & Starosta 2003) from the wealthy East Asian countries and the individualistic view from the USA are necessary for understanding the process of two different civilizations negotiating the dominant world culture and the future of the world (Jiang, Barnett & Taylor 2014; Jiang, Barnett & Chu 2015).

However, a critical question is: can current intercultural communication research truly capture the complex and accurate communication processes between the USA and the East Asian countries? Scholars have argued that previous studies of intercultural communication between the USA and the East Asian countries mainly rely on cross-cultural comparisons, the philosophical foundation of which is to use Western cultures as the standards to measure the East Asian cultures (Bryant & Yang 2004; Fougere & Moulettes 2007; Kim 2010). This Euro-centrism either ignores completely or oversimplifies the complexity of East Asia, and thus seriously hinders the development of intercultural communication research (Chen 2006; Kim 2002). Instead of treating the traditions in East Asia as objects of study, it is imperative for scholars to consider them as sources of concepts and theories in intercultural communication research, since all human cultures are precious resources of humanistic insights and inspiration (Miike 2006). East Asian communication literature provides prominent examples of generating theories from local traditions (Alatas 2006; Chen 2006; Jiang & Barnett 2013; Shim, Kim & Martin 2008). For instance, Jiang and Barnett (2013) re-conceptualized the concept of relationship from a non-western (traditional Chinese) perspective, and argued that it is difficult to truly understand the communication process in China without taking into account the cultural concept of *guanxi*, which is a Chinese notion that social connections are based on the socially situated reciprocity, and recommended that scholars should add a *guanxi* perspective to the examination of various theories that comprise the Western structural (network) theory, including social capital theory, social exchange theory, cognitive and contagion theories.

In addition to the problem of Euro-centrism, another critical issue facing intercultural communication research is scholars' over-emphasis on the cross-cultural comparisons between students with different cultural backgrounds. Typically, intercultural researchers have employed opportunistic samples using students

⁴ According to Huntington (1996), the major civilizations in the world include Western, Orthodox, Islamic, African, Latin American, Chinese, Hindu, Buddhist, and Japanese.

from different countries, generally China, Japan and Korea, studying in the United States to compare with American students. As indicated earlier these individuals are not representative of their native cultures, cultures partly due to the degree of their exposure to the host culture. Intercultural scholars should strive to conduct communication research with representative sample of the societies to which they wish to generalize.

3.2 Student centered cross-cultural comparisons

In the co-occurrence network of concepts used in intercultural communication research (Figure 5.2), *student* has the second largest eigenvector centrality. Scholars focused on comparing the differences of the language, communication strategy and relationship between the American students and international students (i.e. Japanese, Korean and Chinese), and also, from a practical perspective, studying how international students learn English. Although international students are convenient samples for intercultural scholars to study, the above research trend over simplifies intercultural communication research to student-centered cross-cultural comparisons, and cannot truly capture the complexity of intercultural communication in the era of globalization. In today's world, driven by international trade and rapid development of information technology, the long distance interconnectedness has been enabled, time and space are largely compressed, and individuals are linked at the global level through the global net of mass media and telecommunication (Hannerz 1996; Harvey 1989; Mittelman 1996). Given such circumstances, the intercultural communication becomes a dynamic and complex phenomenon involving the process of cultural convergence (Barnett & Kincaid 1983; Barnett & Rosen 2007; Jiang & Barnett 2014b; Kincaid, Yum, Woelfel & Barnett 1983) to some extent. Intercultural communication research needs to take that into account and help better understand it.

At the micro level, when people from different countries and regions have more opportunities to expose themselves to other cultural environments to trade goods and services, watch media programs, and exchange ideas, various modalities of local cultural hybridization has been created, and people are becoming more similar in their needs, tastes, lifestyles, values, and behavior patterns (Barnett & Rosen 2007; Levitt 1983; McLuhan 1964; Sklair 1991). Besides focusing on studying international students, intercultural communication research should pay more attention to various aspects of human life including business, tourism, media consumption (Ang 1990; Crane, Kawashima & Kawasaki 2002; Parker 1998; Reid 2003) and international volunteering. Furthermore, besides difference, similarity also plays an important role in the study of intercultural communication. The observation of both the differences and similarities from a global perspective is crucial for scholars to understand the dynamic essence of the intercultural communication. However, the concept *globalization* is only located at the periphery of the semantic

network closely associated with *media* ($n = 22$), *frames* ($n = 19$), and *news* ($c = 16$), and the concept *similarity* does not emerge in Figure 5.2.

At the macro level, the world's telecommunication and media systems provide a series of arenas in which interactions are being carried out among different nations and cultures with the purpose of negotiating the reality of the world system and the dominant world culture (Barnett 2001; Barnett & Park 2005; Barnett, Ruiz & Park 2015; Park, Barnett & Chung 2011). In the semantic network of intercultural communication research (Figure 5.2), *survey* and *questionnaire* are concepts related to methodology, and has the closest association with *American* and *students*, indicating scholars mainly used survey methodology to study the intercultural communication between American students and international students at the micro level. New methodologies need to be adopted to examine the macro level of intercultural communication. For example, network analysis has been applied to the study of global telecommunication (Barnett 2001; Barnett, Ruiz, Hammond & Xin 2013), web-citations among the worldwide universities (Barnett, Park, Jiang, Tang & Aguillo 2014), and international student flows (Barnett et al. 2015). Also, content analysis has been applied to examine international news flow (Golan, Johnson & Wanta 2010; Kim & Barnett 1996; Rosengren 1987) and the differences in cultural frames in the world's media (Jiang & Barnett 2014a; Jiang & Barnett 2014b; Jiang et al. 2014; Jiang et al. 2015).

3.3 Identity centered intercultural communication research

Identity is the most central concept in the third largest (yellow) cluster of the concept co-occurrence network (Figure 5.2). It is closely associated with *construction* ($n = 54$), *theory* ($n = 43$), and *development* ($n = 36$), indicating the importance of the identity construction in the process of intercultural communication and the significance of the development of identity theory in intercultural communication research. As Hannerz (1987: 555) claimed, "The openness to foreign cultural influences gives people access to technological and symbolic resources for dealing with their own ideas, managing their own culture, in new ways." Intercultural communication first provides people with opportunities to reflect on and re-evaluate the preciousness of their original cultural identity. Then, people's self-reflections on unfamiliar cultural frames working together with their social interactions and freedom to use the power of selection either facilitate or retard the process of cultural convergence. From this perspective, the process of intercultural communication may be considered synonymous with the process of cultural convergence. However, the concept of convergence does not emerge in the semantic structural of intercultural communication research. It is necessary and imperative for scholars to bring the convergence theory into the studies of identity construction in the process of intercultural communication. It is also meaningful to study how socially embedded actors reproduce and, potentially, reinvent their local cultural concepts

in accordance with their personal ideas, interests and commitments, and how multiple cultural idioms intermingle based on these activities on the individual level (Jiang & Barnett 2013).

In addition, *Identity* also has a close relationship with *ethnic* ($n = 46$), which tightly linked to *minority* ($n = 31$) and *American* ($n = 29$) indicating the USA centered intercultural communication research also focuses on the examination of the ethnic identity of minority groups in America. It is well known that the United States has a unique multiracial and multicultural social environment. As Sowell (1981: 3) said “the peopling of America is one of the great dramas in all of human history.” People speaking every language and representing every nationality, race and religion crossed every ocean and continent to reach the United States. In order to build connection among people of different races, national origins, religions, and cultures, common values of tolerance and mutual respect should be cultivated. Therefore, it is also meaningful to bring the convergence perspective into the studies of interethnic communication. Acculturation and assimilation are important concepts for scholars to discuss the convergence process of interethnic communication (Kim 2001). Intercultural scholars should examine how acculturation affects ethnic minorities’ identity construction, and how the tension between the maintenance of minority cultures and the progress of cultural assimilation propels the formation of American culture. Acculturation and assimilation do not emerge in the semantic network of most frequent concepts indicating the importance for scholars to make research on acculturation and assimilation more prominent in interethnic communication research.

4 Summary

This chapter has discussed the topics that have interested the intercultural/international communication scholar as expressed in the research literature of the field, and thus defined the practice of research for the field of intercultural communication. Specifically, it describes a semantic network analysis of abstracts of the last two decades’ published articles that concern intercultural communication. The results of this analysis revealed a Euro-American centric perspective, where the research has focused primarily on the differences between the American and European cultures, and those of East Asia and how they are reflected in communication processes. Also, it has suggested a number of research issues that have been ignored or under studied by intercultural scholars, while flooding attention on student centered cross-cultural comparisons and identity centered research. In addition, it discussed two major theoretical issues that intercultural research has largely ignored. They are, one, differential power in intercultural relations, and two, the notion of voice, the representativeness of who speaks for a cultural group. Finally, this chapter encouraged the reader to consider these issues and the process of

globalization and its implications for the study of intercultural and international communication.

Further Readings

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