

Chapter 8

Developing Intercultural Competence through Glocal Activity Theory Using the Connect–Exchange Study Abroad App

Rich Rice

Texas Tech University, USA

Ben Lauren

Florida International University, USA

ABSTRACT

This chapter lays a theoretical foundation for the development of an emerging model of studying intercultural communication through problem-based study abroad pedagogy. At the center of this model is a new computer tool called the Connect-Exchange App, which is meant to facilitate transactional learning between users with varying cultural backgrounds. To research how different audiences might use the app, the authors draw upon activity theory to guide their iterative design process to facilitate users' deepening glocal, intercultural competence. Developing intercultural competence is a process of iterative experiences connecting, exchanging, and filtering information.

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INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Workable solutions for communication problems in global societies come from flexible approaches. Such solutions require a high level of *intercultural competence* in order to listen, reason, and debate productively. Intercultural competence is the ability to communicate successfully with people through an understanding of culturally-specific values in order to identify differences related to ethics, politics, religion, literacy, morality, history, geography, and ethnicity. While glocalization is typically defined as the distribution of products or ideas which are dispensed globally yet accommodate users in local markets—essentially micro-marketing (Tharpe, 2001)—glocal thinking following principles of transactional rhetoric can also foster productive dialectical exchange.

We have known for many years that productive transactional models of communication include an information source, transmitter, channel, receiver, and destination. They tackle three categories of problems: technical, semantic, and behavior change (Shannon & Weaver, 1949). James A. Berlin (1987) in *Rhetoric and Reality* points out that culture and experience influences the socially-

constructed realities of writers or speakers as they interact with others. For Kenneth Burke, rhetoric is equipment for living, and we can use rhetoric to overcome technical, semantic, and behavioral miscommunication. But learning how to develop intercultural competence in communicative environments facilitating glocal, transactional rhetoric is an enormously complex, context-driven, and ongoing process.

THE NEED FOR INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE MASHING

Spend a few minutes reviewing recent news media with glocal transactional rhetoric in mind to examine such complexity. We must assume people are in some way connected through communication tools, that we are sender-receivers rather than merely senders, and that we must work to achieve *stasis* or shared recognition of cultural disjuncture or hegemonic forces through a productive level of intercultural competence. As an example, consider a recent debate between Pakistani young girls about nuclear proliferation and “Indian aggression” (“What,” 2011). Certainly

Figure 1. What Pakistani girls think about India (<http://tinyurl.com/mzlsj3t>)



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