CROSS-CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE FOR INTEROPERABILITY

Virgil Florian NEAGOE

"Henri Coandă" Air Force Academy, Braşov, Romania (nflorianvirgil@gmail.com)

Abstract: In relationships between people, politeness is often not enough in the socialization process and in trying to avoid interpersonal conflicts. When two different cultures come into contact, frustrations and agreement can arise from the different way of perceiving respect or interpreting non-verbal language.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Culture, in essence, is reflected in social organization and development of a society, in the institutionalized and internalized daily practices by the members of a society, which thus make them have more similarities than differences and, in the same time, individualizes them as a group among other groups that have similar characteristics. Culture is not something that belongs to or can only be found within a social class, it is not a privilege, it is ubiquitous; all societies, all civilizations of all times had a more or less developed but unique culture, which made them exist as unique and indivisible entities and assert their individuality among other societies and civilizations.

The organizational culture of the army is based on a strictly structural leadership, from top to bottom, with a chain of command organized in accordance with the principle of centralization. This ensures that the central structure will and the planning processes to develop actions of the organization as a whole. The relevant information for the action is transmitted from top to bottom, the competence to initiate the action is strongly limited at the base of the hierarchical structure.

As a rule, the armed forces are stationed in barracks and garrisons, separated from the civilian world. For functional needs the community is appreciated strongly than the individual, there is a clear priority of the community. In military culture the individual is instrumentalized and individualized in favor of the group, the soldier is expected to sacrifice his freedom and, if inevitable, his life for a collective purpose to which he may not adhere.

2. CULTURAL DIFFRENCES AND INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE

Cultural differences are discrepancies or contrasts that are found when comparing two or more different cultures. These differences may be related to customs, religion, clothing or language, among others. A clear example of cultural differences is seen in the way people in Latin America greet, usually when they shake hands and even kiss their cheeks, compared to people in Asia, where body contact is not usual.

Cultural differences arise, in principle, due to the different ways of life that human beings have adopted in different regions of the planet. Because they were formed in different ways, and with different points of view and codes, some very far apart.

Today, cultural differences between countries are slightly less than they were a few years ago. This is due, among other things, to the level of globalization and migration that exists today on the planet. In this sense, many customs are taken and adapted by different cultures, transforming the traditions of these countries.

However, there are still many characteristics, within different cultures, that continue to make them different from each other. Here are some examples of cultural differences between countries: In Russia, for example, prolonged eye contact can be interpreted as a form of aggression or as an attempt to provoke the person being viewed. This type of behavior, which in Western culture is as natural as possible, is also considered rude and aggressive in Japan. In Arab countries, eye contact is only allowed in the case of people of the same sex, but is inadmissible if the persons are of different sexes.

In Thailand, it is considered disrespectful to cross one's legs or point the tip of one's foot at someone because this part of the body is seen as inferior and unworthy to draw attention to it.

If you receive a gift from a person of Chinese nationality, it is polite to refuse the gift several times before receiving it with the necessary thanks. In many Asian countries, including China, the act of pouring your own drink into a glass is seen as disrespectful. It is polite for the person who keeps you company at the table to do this, while you will make the same gesture. The tip is considered an insult in Japan and, most of the time, the waiters or those you offered it to will return it to you.

Most people living in the Scandinavian Peninsula value silence and consider it an integral part of a conversation, so if long breaks appear in discussions with them, there is no need to rush to fill them. In some Arab countries, holding hands between two men is seen as a sign of friendship and respect, with no other implications.

In Canada, when tea or coffee is served to guests, it may be a sign that it is time for them to prepare for departure.

Intercultural communication comes with a lot of challenges. A real intercultural communication happens only after you manage to somehow harmonize the ideas, the cultural perceptions, to transform the differences into similarities and similarities into common objectives. You cannot talk about intercultural communication until you understand each culture very well and until people from both cultures have a common goal that can determine intercultural communication.

- Ethnocentrism. Everyone looks at a different culture from a personal, subjective perspective. Ethnocentrism occurs when we believe that everything we do and what we believe in is the only way to achieve something. Everything that is not in our view is not looked upon favorably. The behavior of others becomes strange and inappropriate. There is also a clear division between us and them, between two diametrically opposed mentalities.

- Psychological barriers. You cannot have the existence of intercultural communication if you do not show flexibility in thinking and behavior. Many times you feel that everything you do is against ethics and the results you hope for may not be what you want. An example: in France, in companies, feedback is provided based on things that did not work. You go to the USA and suddenly there is an emphasis on what you did well and not on what was bad. If there is flexibility in thinking and not letting psychological barriers dominate, there is going to be real intercultural communication

- The stereotype. It represents a rigid and superficial form of thinking, a cultural cliché, a representation of others according to a priori established categories. Prejudice is a negative attitude or a predisposition to adopt a negative behavior towards a group or towards the members of this group, based on an erroneous or rigid generalization. The stereotype and the prejudice work, most of the times, together, the stereotype representing the cognitive component, while the prejudice constitutes the affective, emotional component. The two terms undoubtedly have a strong negative charge, but it must be remembered that operating with stereotypes and prejudices is something that happens to all of us, because, being unable to fully know a reality, we have to resort to these "prefabricated schemes". Not all stereotypes are negative: there are generalizing clichés or labels, most of the time that concern ourselves or a group to which we belong, and that operate with positive appreciations. Example: "Romanians are hardworking, hospitable and generous". Many of the stereotypes and prejudices are culturally transmitted, from one generation to another, including within the same culture..

- Language barriers. In all mixed teams, with people from several cultures, there is a common language in which communication takes place. But when some are more fluent in a language, the social distance between team members also appears. It is difficult to understand someone who speaks a language you do not master, you can no longer do your job, performance and skills are already perceived differently.

- Conflicting values. Any behavior is influenced by individual values. Intercultural communication problems occur when a behavior compromises one's own values. When you do not understand or disagree with a behavior it means that there are conflicting values there. Cultural conflict values are quite difficult to spot, they are a matter of detail, of subtlety.

In order to communicate effectively with the members of a different culture, the individual needs to develop the competence of intercultural communication.

In a general expression, this concept represents the ability of the individual to adapt to the communicative style specific to another culture, to effectively manage, successfully, the situations of intercultural communication

Intercultural communication competence is acquired through learning and is defined through three dimensions:

• The internal capacities and abilities of the individual
• Communication results
• Individual attitudes

The efficiency of intercultural communication consists in the success of individuals to achieve their goals. Also, intercultural communication is appropriate when individuals know and respect the constraints imposed on the communicative behaviors of sets various rules .

These two parameters, efficiency and adequacy, led to four styles of intercultural communication with different results (Spitzberg, 2000, according to Şerbănescu, 2007):

1. Minimal communication - has low quality, and its features are in the range [-efficiency, -adequacy];

2. Sufficient communication - although it respects socio-contextual constraints, it does not contribute to achieving (inter)personal goals, its features being in the range [-efficiency, + adequacy];

It is as if we were presenting ourselves at an interview and explaining much and well what experience and knowledge we have, and in the end we would directly receive the rejected verdict, despite everything we have explained.

3. Maximum communication - in which the individual, although achieving his personal goals, neglects the rules of socio-contextual adequacy through verbal aggression, Machiavellianism, deception, violation of the rights of others. The features of this type of communication fall within the range [+ efficiency, -adequacy];

4. Optimal communication - individuals achieve their goals by resorting to verbal and nonverbal behavior appropriate to the communication situation; its features are in the range [+ efficiency, + adequacy].

As mentioned above, the competence of intercultural communication is acquired through learning, but, in parallel, the development of this competence is favored by a series of personal skills and knowledge. In other words, intercultural communication involves the adoption of special interaction strategies. Bowe and Fernandez identified six such strategies, useful in situations of communication (according to Şerbănescu, 2007):

1) Collaboration of interlocutors - to ensure that the message was transmitted and understood correctly;

Listening in a communication is essential, but if the other person does not make a sound, then we should really ask ourselves a question mark.

2) Creating a positive team spirit - to avoid certain misunderstandings; Regardless of personal problems, we must present a state of well-being, smile as much as possible, but not in an exaggerated way, to make sure that the interlocutor does not feel embarrassed and to enjoy continuing the communication relationship.

3) Attention to possible cultural differences - differences can affect the way of communication;

We need to understand and accept that our interlocutor comes from a different culture and think that maybe the way we live or think is strange to him.

4) Interactional adaptation - the existence of interventions equal to those of the interlocutors

5) Simple speech - to avoid confusion;

We are different cultures, consequently we have different lifestyles. We will never use in communication with a Chinese, for example, a specific dialect difficult for him, but we will use a general vocabulary.

6) Avoiding ungrammatical, unnatural structures, inconsistent with the language of interaction - avoiding exaggerated simplifications.

These strategies were classified, by Byrne and FitzGerald (according to Şerbănescu, 2007), in:

•General strategies - recommended in most situations of intercultural communication;
•Additional strategies - recommended in situations where the interlocutor does not know very well the language of interaction; Moreover, the two authors made some recommendations regarding these strategies used in intercultural communication. These recommendations are summarized in the table below.

Table 1. Source: Şerbănescu, 2007, p. 292-293

General strategies	Additional strategies
Communicate any cultural communication difference to the other party that you have the impression that it could prevent efficient development of the interaction	Do not segment content units
If misunderstandings arise, reformulate the statement, do not repeat it	Repeat important or difficult messages, reassuring that the idea was understood correctly
Clarify with the interlocutor the intentions in behind your statements	Tell the other person explicitly when an important or difficult part of a message follows
Expect the interlocutor to could formulate ideas differently	Make simple and correct statements
Attenuate statements with negative effects on the interlocutor	

3. CULTURAL AWARNESS AND COMPETENCE IN MULTINATIONAL MILITARY MISSIONS

In order to highlight the role of cultural knowledge, the importance of developing cultural skills to facilitate intercultural interoperability in joint military missions, I will exemplify and analyze different cases as follows:

Table 2. Comparative presentation of cultural events in joint military actions at peace (Munster) and in the theater of operations. Source: Rita Palaghia, "Diferente culturale în teatrul de operaţii Afganistan"

The First Joint Corps (Germany-Netherlands Corps) at Munster	Joint Corps in Afghanistan	Multinational forces (KAIA military base)	Headquarters of the mission in Afghanistan (KABUL)
The Germans and the Dutch said in interviews that they trusted each other professionally. This finding is constant over a period of eight years. While the image of trust in German soldiers became stronger, the Dutch had to work on their own image. The same can be said about the meaning of duty. The most striking difference concerns the formal versus informal codes of conduct (the Dutch being informal and liberal in terms of rigidity, sociability and independence).	It was a case of binational cooperation, on the background of a multinational mission, but the contribution of the two countries was clearly unbalanced [12]. The camp was densely populated, the tents of Dutch soldiers were clearly isolated from the Germans. In a situation of isolation, gossip and complaints are likely to develop, which has indeed happened among the Dutch.	Airport activities are successful, staff are encouraged to report "challenges instead of problems" (a slogan made visible on banners and posters), a practice similar to how they are used in their own NATO bases. The stated attitude of the staff is the orientation towards fulfilling the duty of service: "They want to help keep the door open between Afghanistan and the world."	The very high level of training and representation of the staff in HQ Resolute Support created the premises for a top-level collaboration both professional and culturally interoperable. It is proof that long-term training and common experience in various military actions are the solution to reducing cultural frictions.

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This difference can lead to different styles of interaction which in turn could lead to friction between the Dutch military. Leadership styles differ in the Netherlands and Germany [11]. Authoritarian style is more common in the German army, while participatory style is characteristic of the Dutch.. Most of the German military showed a preference for the Dutch leadership style. Perhaps these styles are influenced by structural differences, such as the difference between an army of volunteers and an army of recruits. Minor differences lead to national stereotypes When national stereotypes become irritating, it is perceived as a phenomenon called "narcissism of minor differences." The attitude of the Dutch towards the Germans at the beginning of the study was negative, much more negative than towards other nationalities but changed over time with deeper mutual knowledge. A basic condition for successful military cooperation between two nations is communication and mutual understanding. This condition is best summed up in the concept of sympathy The progressive approach within the German-	The Dutch have constantly complained about the supply of goods (including weapons and ammunition), logistics in general, the security policies implemented by the Germans, the availability of telephones, the quality of food, and policies on alcohol consumption(which were different between Germans and Dutch [13]). In general, the Dutch criticized the way the Germans conducted the mission and the tasks they ordered to be accomplished. In addition, the Dutch did not understand why the Germans had better accommodation facilities and financial allocations different from their own. This situation did not improve even after the first rotation of Dutch units. The problems at Camp Warehouse have been heard at the Corps Command in Münster [15], and at the ISAF Command in Kabul. After the return of military personnel to Münster, the Dutch and German commanders of the corps felt the need to pay considerable attention to improving relations between the personnel participating in the mission in Kabul [14].	There have been a number of language issues since the beginning of the mission. In addition, national rules and regulations are different, sometimes causing disciplinary issues. The pace of decision-making has sometimes been criticized, with shortcomings attributed to the complex multinational chain of command and control. Despite some problems, the KAIA military is generally satisfied with the mission and sees their work in Afghanistan as "just another job." In addition, the continued increase in the number of civilian air connections to and from Kabul demonstrates the success of Operation KAIA. We consider this case a good example of international military cooperation. Standardization of communication has an essential role in ensuring efficient interoperability	

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Dutch 1st Army Corps, of the integrated binational interaction even outside the headquarters, can be considered a milestone in the process of European integration. Although there has not been much room for emotional identity between members of different military cultures involved in this bi-national collaboration process, there is common ground when it comes to profession, goals, and professional standards. In order for these standards to merge, it is necessary to increase the share of time spent together and, in particular, the time allocated to collective exercises and skills.	German-Dutch operational cooperation at Camp Warehouse ended in the autumn of 2003. Given all these processes and results, we consider this case as an example of international strain on military cooperation, and the common preparation is prerequisite, even if it is long enough turns out to be an important element, but not always enough.		

The analysis of the four case studies highlights the fact that cultural knowledge and skills development are necessary conditions for achieving cultural interoperability of coalition forces, but it must be borne in mind that the implicit stress of theaters of operations, to which are added different accommodation and remuneration of the forces contributes to the accentuation of the frictions between them and the decrease of interoperability.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Taking into account those mentioned in the article, we can conclude that, although the globe is one, it hosts hundreds of different cultures, and even within the same culture we find differences. it is impossible to learn all the cultural elements from all existing cultures, but they must be taken into account when there is an international relationship.

The indispensability of intercultural communication for a person in a leadership position must be emphasized, in a relationship it is essential to know the "language" of the interlocutor, and cultural education is paramount.

Common, long-term training generates and strengthens cultural knowledge trust between the military. Along with a level of knowledge of the English language at a considerable level, these elements automatically generate a interrelationship with minimal friction.

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