


# Chapter 19

## Decision Making Process in Intercultural Communication

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### ABSTRACT

*The society we live in and the culture we're surrounded by all have an impact on our decision-making processes requiring that media literacy skills start flourishing during the early years. Globalization changed the dynamics of the world and society by removing any limitations of time and space. Thus, different cultures and values encounter one another, which is why media literacy and intercultural awareness are becoming the key skills in today's world. This chapter aims to analyze the stages, reasons, and the choices of the decision-making process of individuals from different cultural backgrounds in an intercultural communication setting where they were given certain problems for which they were expected to find solutions in a limited amount of time. The chapter mainly discusses the notion of "tolerance" and "judgement": how one positions her/himself in an intercultural environment and how s/he approaches a problem with the awareness of cultural differences.*

### INTRODUCTION<sup>1</sup>

A globalized world gave birth to a globalized world culture, which brought along several challenges and obstacles, as well as incredibly rapid ways of connecting individuals, ideas, national and local cultures. This sort of connection also meant sharing those ideas, perspectives, values, morals and beliefs through either an intercultural or an intracultural communication. As Miulescu (2014) stated, "the communication has been observed, as a fundamental element of human existence, since ancient times. In fact, the real etymology of the term suggests that the word "*communication*" comes from the Latin word '*communis*,' meaning 'to agree,' 'being in relation with' or 'being in a relationship,' although the term circulates in the ancient vocabulary, meaning 'convey to others,' 'to share something with others'" (Miulescu, 2014: 691).

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## ***Decision Making Process in Intercultural Communication***

Communicating is only possible within a given society which has formulated a kind of set of signals to make it possible. It's neither a certain language nor a specific culture that makes communication possible. It's a combination of both. Yet, no one knows enough about the dominant part whether it's the language, culture or community itself to lead people to certain decisions. Regarding the language and culture bound, Thibault argues that Saussure was mainly concerned with trying to formulate a theory of how meanings are made. (2013). Similarly, Chomsky also dwells on language and culture relationship (1984). Whereas Schwartz argues that the language is a part of culture so essential to the specification of human nature that it both pervades the rest of culture and is most readily taken as its controlling metonymic analogy (Schwartz, 1981: 7), Lamb states that language is evidently less complex than culture (Lamb, 1984: 71).

To Hjelmslev, "Linguistic theory is led by an inner necessity to recognize not merely the linguistic system, in its schema and in its usage, in its totality and in its individuality, but also man and human society behind language, and all man's sphere of knowledge through language" (Hjelmslev, 1961: 127) However, Vygotsky's theories emphasises the fundamental role of social interaction in the development of cognition (Vygotsky, 1978), as he believed strongly that community plays a central role in the process of "making meaning."

Comparing Vygotsky with Piaget, McLeod states that "According to Vygotsky adults are an important source of cognitive development. Adults transmit their culture's tools of intellectual adaptation that children internalize. In contrast Piaget emphasizes the importance of peers as peer interaction promotes social perspective taking (McLeod, 2014: 8). To Vygotsky *Elementary Mental Functions* activate the decision making process and these are Attention, Sensation, Perception and Memory and at each stage peer impact is inevitable. He explains it as follows:

*For example, the child could not solve the jigsaw puzzle (in the example above) by itself and would have taken a long time to do so (if at all), but was able to solve it following interaction with the father, and has developed competence at this skill that will be applied to future jigsaws. (McLeod, 2014: 3).*

Vygotsky (1978) sees the *Zone of Proximal Development* as the area where the most sensitive instruction or guidance should be given - allowing the child to develop skills they will then use on their own - developing higher mental functions (McLeod, 2014: 3). Thus, it's not only the notions of language and culture but also the community shaping the perspectives and decision-making process to a certain degree.

It can be argued that there is a specific link between communication and culture. Culture is a dynamic structure that is evolving with people consciously or unconsciously creating or being exposed to it and people are born and raised for a certain amount of time in a country, which has a national and social culture that is unique in its own way. Therefore, people learn and speak their own language and get familiar with their own culture and concepts. Given the nature of an intercultural communication, these two seem to be the building blocks for it. Communicating with people through language in one's own local/national cultural setting can be seen as the first building block for an exposure and participation in an intercultural communication. However, as for the second building block which is culture, there might be a need for an additional aspect: cultural awareness. Individuals perceive their environments or settings, norms, rules, societal patterns as what is "normal" most of the time. Awareness of a local/national culture, in terms of its effects on an individual and on a society, usually requires an active self-reflection and a process of critical analysis of one's own perspectives, and the society in question.

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