



Interculturality

Mélodine Sommer & Malgorzata Lahti

UNIVERSITY OF JYVÄSKYLÄ, FINLAND

What is it?

The term interculturality describes processes by which individuals in specific communication situations make various forms of culture relevant. Thus, interculturality emphasizes the socially constructed nature of intercultural interactions. Interactions become intercultural when notions of "culture" or "cultural difference" are produced by interactants. Interculturality therefore breaks away with the view of culture as an objective entity that determines interaction, and instead asks how culture is made relevant. This concept is used to highlight intercultural communication as complex, unstable, dynamic, and multilayered. Interculturality is also used to shed light on different ideologies, such as essentialism, racism, or sexism, that can enter interactions in multiple fragmented ways. As such, interculturality underlines the fact that power is deeply woven into intercultural communication.

Who uses the concept?

Interculturality was initially used by critical scholars within the field of Intercultural Communication looking for a term that would reflect their critique of essentialism and turn towards critical constructivist and social constructionist approaches.

Fit with intercultural dialogue?

Interculturality is a useful notion to depart from idealized understandings of intercultural dialogue. Within this approach, revised models of intercultural competence have been proposed. These can, in turn, expand our

understanding of intercultural dialogue by shifting attention to processes of identification, othering, and representation.

What work remains?

Interculturality has mostly been employed in the context of higher education. Work remains to explore interactions in other settings, such as business, management, tourism, migration and adaptation, language instruction, healthcare, and social work, to name a few. Finally, many applications of interculturality suffer from Janusianism, where authors first align themselves with the approach but then, in their analysis and discussion, fall back on essentialist notions of cultural identities. In this sense, more research consistently using the approach is needed.

Resources

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