

# Cross-cultural communications in national educational spaces in a global world

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**Abstract.** This article analyses features of cross-cultural communications and related problems arising in national educational spaces in a global world. The author describes the features of cross-cultural communication. It is argued that communication processes between members of different cultures should take into account the linguistic and cultural background of subjects of communication. The article analyses the development of global educational space from the Antiquity to the present day. The author describes the features of modern transdisciplinary studies and the role of the subject in a modern educational space. An analysis of different approaches to text analysis is presented.

Studying different ways to analyse problems of education and identifying axiological and normative problems of education and the features of interactions between different educational systems, shaped by their home cultures in different historical intervals, are eternal and always relevant problems of the humanity. As many other major problems of the humanity, they have not been completely solved, nor will they ever be. However, these problems have to be studied. Here a thought recorded in L. Wittgenstein's 1914 diary seems to be relevant. He urged an abstract interlocutor to avoid engaging with particular problems and try to escape where one can observe a certain global problem in whole [1]. This holds true for discussions on cross-cultural communication (CCC) in modern national educational spaces included in the global world system.

Communicative processes developing between members of different cultures require taking into account the linguistic and cultural backgrounds of subjects of communication. Related problems become extremely urgent as migration increases and the country of education can be chosen regardless of the place of birth. Ensuing cross-cultural communication turns into a process involving two or more subjects. Not only individuals but also groups, and even countries can be subjects of communication. In cross-cultural communication, subjects belonging to different cultures engage in communication 'to transfer or exchange information and values using established systems of signs, norms, rules, and techniques' [2].

In a certain sense, examining the educational space of the modern global world requires analysing cross-cultural communication in different sections of the complex modern social space, its particular instance being the space of education. This creates a non-classical context for analysing the problems of culture [3,4,5] –

the context of cross-cultural interactions in a global educational space. Overall, an educational system is a crucial element of the megasystem of society, a factor of political and geopolitical stability/instability of the state and society [6].

At the same time, one should not forget that the global educational space emerged in the Antiquity rather than the recent years. Educational system patterns inspired by the Ancient Greek model, which is inseparable from ancient philosophical thought, remain influential to this day.

For instance, in August 2103, Athens hosted the 23<sup>rd</sup> World Congress of Philosophy entitled 'Philosophy as Inquiry and Way of Life' (The World Congress of Philosophy has been held since the 1990s, regularly once in five years. Twice, world wars prevented Congress from convening). The official opening ceremony took place in the legendary Athenian amphitheatre. According to the official statistics, the Congress was attended by 3114 people from 100 countries [7]. When addressing the Congress participants, the President of the Greek Organising Committee Konstantine Boudouris stressed that all of them were ambassadors of Greek philosophy in the world. He was most probably right. However, it is important to understand that the ideas of Greek philosophy are translated as part of the educational processes in its certain form realised by a concrete educational institution. In this context, a modern congress contributes to mutual understanding, grasping philosophical ideas (in the case of philosophical congresses), and developing new professional communications. At the same time, it seems important to understand that contemporary cultural globalisation affects the system of education. Whereas, in the past, global trends were most pronounced in the educational system, system of law, and individual fragments of other

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fields, the modern globalised economy gives rise to new forms of globalisation affecting very different spheres.

Therefore, the problem of analysing cross-cultural interactions in a modern global education space is becoming increasingly relevant. A visible manifestation of this new global phenomenon is the Bologna process. Anyone acquainted with problems of education understands how much this phrase means to numerous national educational spaces existing in a global world. This problem has been addressed in research literature. Over the past seventeen years, since the Bologna declaration was signed, numerous works have been published in Russia and the West. Moreover, today one can speak of a specific area of culture that emerged in the framework of the Bologna process and a special educational space emerging within the social spaces of different modern states. This holds true for both the West and Russia.

On the one hand, some of the ensuing problems are of a general nature and others are purely communicative and relate to studying cross-cultural interactions in the sphere of education. All this requires reaching the following objectives:

- identifying the influence of cross-cultural communications on the system of education;
- studying problems of cross-cultural communications in the system of education in view of the uneven development of the world economy;
- understanding the particularities of establishing effective communications with different educational systems and cultures, for instance, those involved in the Bologna process;
- realising that equalising educational spaces of different states cannot be achieved through merely translating lectures delivered at national universities from the Russian into the English;
- understanding that the development of an educational space is affected by not only the educational system as such but also transformations in philosophy, social sciences, the humanities, and politics. In a certain sense, they create a possibility for theoretical changes in the educational space, which can result in practical solutions.

A modern educational space necessitates *identifying cultural differences* and even incompatibilities of cultures placed in a single educational space, on the one hand, and analysing conditions for the development of cross-cultural communication and cooperation within a common educational space despite numerous differences, on the other. Cross-cultural cooperation emerging in the framework of an educational space can be translated to the level of asocial space.

One of key aspects of modern educational space development is introducing the transdisciplinarity system into the system of education. It is important to stress that the ideas of transdisciplinarity neither exclude nor contradict those of interdisciplinarity. However, the former have proven to be in demand within educational spaces of different modern states.

Figuratively speaking, interdisciplinarity is impartial to problems of the subject. However, a modern educational space attaches major significance to the

interpersonal aspects of interactions emerging within an educational system. The subject becomes an important factor in not only perceiving and assessing but also developing an educational space. The ideas of transdisciplinarity are a response to the new trends in modern science and culture in general and the system of education in particular.

The phenomenon of transdisciplinarity is relevant when considering the issues of coordinating basic and applied knowledge and integrating disciplinary-specific knowledge. Even in this sense, this phenomenon is included in the context of CCC. Transdisciplinarity requires taking into account the perspectives of subjects involved in solving certain problems, in particular, those relating to the practical application of obtained knowledge. Transdisciplinarity engenders a shift in the correlation between the autonomy of scientific knowledge and the system of education, on the one hand, and the problems of practical application of obtained knowledge and the need to ensure the results of research and educational process, on the other. Transdisciplinarity within an educational space blurs the boundaries between individual disciplines. This necessitates revisiting the correlation between research significance and practical utility. The above issues are crucial for the development of a modern educational space in a globalising world, whereas solving them is closely connected with CCC.

In the modern conditions, transdisciplinarity problems are considered in the context of both norms and values of current cultures and civilisation development. The transdisciplinary approach promotes and implements the idea of immediate inclusion of science and current social problems into the system of education. This is clearly stated in the article prepared by R.W. Scholz in collaboration with colleagues from the Swiss Institute of Technology (ETH Zurich). R.W. Scholz is one of the most prominent western contributors to the development of a transdisciplinary approach in education. In particular, the mentioned article suggests that understanding the need to introduce the ideas of transdisciplinarity into a modern educational space became evident after the Chernobyl disaster [8]. The educational concept of transdisciplinarity is closely related to modern social, environmental, and economic problems.

However, transdisciplinarity contains the idea of disciplinarity in a 'diluted form'. This suggests involving representatives of different scientific disciplines and social agents into the process of knowledge generation. In this sense, science transcends the boundaries between individual disciplines and becomes transdisciplinary in a modern educational space.

However, problems of education become a driver behind the development of transdisciplinary ideas in the modern world [8]. It is impossible to understand transdisciplinary studies divorced from the educational environment and problems of education. This idea is conveyed in the monograph *Transdisciplinarity in philosophy and science: Approaches, Problems, and Prospects*. The educational component of transdisciplinarity ideas is expressed in the titles of the

monograph's sections, for instance, 'Transdisciplinary case studies as an approach to education' [8]. The monograph is somewhat of a roadmap for the idea of transdisciplinarity [9].

At the same time, an analysis of the transdisciplinarity problem shows that, initially, the ideas of transdisciplinarity had no bearing on educational processes. The notion of transdisciplinarity was coined in the 1970s in discussion between the psychologist Jean Piaget and the mathematician Erich Jantsch. The notion started to gain currency in 1972, when it was used at a conference of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

It is important to stress that the notion of disciplinarity was not constructed at once and it is not self-evident. It was sought for and constructed in the context of a dialogical polyphony provided by different disciplines. Finally, it was sought for in discussing not only social and economic, but also educational problems. Such discussions trigger interactions between different scientific disciplines, which cause a number of epistemological and educational problems. There is a need to 'coordinate disciplinary and interdisciplinary research on educational systems' [9]. In such a discussion, two people acting within the frameworks of their disciplines – psychology (Piaget) and mathematics (Jantsch) – searched for universal mechanisms of cognition, thus constructing the notion of 'transdisciplinarity'. However, promoting the ideas of transdisciplinarity seems to be impossible beyond an educational space.

The system of education creates conditions for coordinating disciplinary, interdisciplinary, and transdisciplinary studies. The problem of transdisciplinarity is connected with the integration of theoretical and practical knowledge generated in a certain society, within a concrete axiological and ethical coordinate system based on specific styles of thinking.

This problem is inseparable from the evolution of modern forms of knowledge generation, the particularities of developing relationships between science, society, educational system, economy, and politics, and understanding the fact the subject of an activity cannot be considered beyond the context of this activity in any social coordinate system. In this context, the ideas of transdisciplinarity become closely connected with various aspects of CCC.

Transdisciplinary studies are securing a special place in the modern research and educational spaces. This is not a coincidence. The ideas of transdisciplinarity have a significant heuristic potential and create special conditions for the development of a modern educational space. In a certain sense, transdisciplinarity is a special form of cross-cultural communication necessitating interactions between languages and cultures of different disciplinary spaces.

Moreover, a major tool for structuring a communicative space shaped by the ideas of disciplinarity is text analysis. The historical forms of mutual influences between science and education developed within the space of communication. The results of these influences did not manifest at once.

Reliable, tested research results were steadily published if relevant studies were not classified. Then, these results were formalised in textbooks, becoming elements of the educational system. The comprehensive system of education, which was based on the results presented in different text variants, got school and university students 'immersed' in various scientific contexts. These contexts contributed to the development of people committed to scientific knowledge and professional research. Then, history repeated itself. However, each time history would involve working with and analysing texts.

Moreover, until the late 1980s, different 'printed' textbooks remained a major source of information. When necessary, learning materials would be supplemented with research articles and monographs. A circulation of people and ideas was characteristic of the history of both science and education. In this circulation, working with and analysing texts were major tools for the development of science, education, and their mutual influences.

One of the particularities of the current stage of educational space development is information technology forming a new attitude to science, education, texts, and working with the latter. A new educational space is emerging – a space unknown to the Ancient Oecumene. The new educational space has its advantages and disadvantages [10]. For instance, commitment to information technology results in the inability of educational process subjects to read a serious text, since they lack text analysis skills.

Contemporary subjects of research and educational processes – school and university students – are often oriented to receiving information from various electronic databases (in the best case) rather than analysing texts independently. Sometimes, they prefer other Internet resources, including social networks. However, the source of information is so miniature at any point in space or time that it can easily fit in a purse, pocket, backpack, etc. Easy access to information and its ready availability often result in 'non-thinking', consumerist worldview, overconfidence, and 'extraordinary ease of thinking', as it was put by the memorable character of Gogol's *The Inspector General*. Teamwork principles are becoming obsolete in research and education. Research – including cross-cultural – communications (in the sheer variety of the meanings of this phrase) are turning into a thing of the past.

This situation cannot but raise concerns in the research and academic communities. Different projects aimed to overcome this problem emerge at the international level. Some of them are developed in Russia. Let us consider two cases – an international project and the expert analysis methodology developed by the author.

A large research and academic project was developed in the West. First, it was carried out by institutes of technology committed to training specialising in engineering, which required text analysis skills. This is the CDIO (Conceive – Design – Implement – Operate) international project [11]. It was officially launched in 2000 by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in collaboration with three Swedish Universities – the Chalmers University of Technology, Linköping

University, and the Royal Institute of Technology. The title of the project is a slogan vowing commitment to developing intellectual activities rather than minimising it based on easy online access to information. This project suggests effective text analysis. Today, the project brings together over 100 universities, including those from the UK, the US, and Russia [12]. An analysis of this teaching model creating a special educational space shows that the system of interactions between students and professors is changing. This model engages students in carrying out projects from the 'conceive' to 'operate' stages. Moreover, the CDIO methodology is being introduced into the systems of not only engineering but also pedagogical education.

The author believes that the main idea of the 'Conceive – Design – Implement – Operate' slogan was introduced into philosophical education as early as the 1980s in the framework of her methodology of expert text analysis. Of course, initially, the methodology was not designed to meet the needs of engineering projects. However, working with texts is crucial for both the humanities and engineering. Moreover, just as CDIO, the expert text analysis methodology contains the idea of developing intellectual activities relating to projecting, implementing project results, and operating projects [13].

The expert analysis methodology rests on not only text analysis but also the teamwork method of educational space organisation and developing a special communication space in the process of text analysis. This methodology defines the status of students and professors as that of subjects engaged in communication focusing on analysing a certain text. A practical analysis of texts structures an educational space differently from the classical approach. It makes the communication process in the classroom more dynamic. Conceptual problems are discussed and solved in a group. This methodology is based on the classical ideas of dialogue and question/answer system. At the same time, it suggests the possibility of using ICT.

The methodology stresses that using information and communications technology (ICT) in the educational process and everyday life suggests that the user is a person capable of independent intellectual efforts and treating digital technology as an effective tool for attaining concrete objectives. The processes of overcoming the information chaos, searching for meanings, etc. do not occur arbitrarily through pressing random keys (it seems that the situation described by Jonathan Swift in the 18th century – Gulliver's visit to the Grand Academy of Lagado – remains relevant in the era of computer technology: pressing random keys produces either an arbitrary result or nonsense), but they are guided by a sentient subject rationally looking for necessary information and capable of creating and identifying meanings.

Only treating ICT as an end in itself can decrease the quality of education and turn it into a meaningless technical procedure – a result of living in the information chaos. ICT has been used throughout the world as a tool for organising a modern educational space. The cognitive subject of a modern educational space, capable

of generating meanings, develops in the dialogue environment of inter-subject – including cross-cultural – communications. All this stresses the need to maintain and develop – in view of the current educational space opportunities – the key components of high-quality education dating back to the Antiquity. Of course, one should not forget about modern digital technology ensuring quick access to necessary information for both professors and students.

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