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Language Culture Communication

Summary. The aim of the study is to outline the role of language as the most effective tool of communication accessible to human beings in the context of international communication. Intercultural communication allows to indicate the diversity of intentions with which we enter into communicative relationships. It also highlights the need to take into account cultural difference in order to achieve understanding: the greater the extent to which diversity is taken into account and the greater the accompanying effort to reconstruct cultural beliefs, the higher the efficiency of communication.

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Language seems to be the most effective tool of communication accessible to human beings. All previous tools – gestures, sounds – began to play a less important role the moment that language came into being and, significantly, can be represented and interpreted in language (shrugging shoulders as an expression of indifference or contempt, a smile as an expression of liking or satisfaction), and in language they can gain greater precision in comparison to their previous ambiguity (this quality is still successfully used in social games). Later media of communication, such as writing, maintain their derivation from language even if they gain intrinsic qualities – and so writing is a graphic notation of language; however, it can influence the manner

and structure of thinking. The limitations of language, such as its ambiguity, insufficient precision (which is nevertheless far better than that of previous tools) do not in any way downgrade his primary role in interpersonal communication

Telepathic communication would perhaps be more effective, and though accepted by some (this is perhaps a longing brought about due to disillusionment with the imperfection of existing tools), apart from the fact that there is no uncontested proof that it actually exists, it also requires that one assume the existence of a universal *mentalese*¹ operating beyond perceived and experienced linguistic diversity, which is a rather extreme assumption that would only be entertained by a few philosophers and scholars. Until telepathy becomes a widespread form of communication, language remains unrivaled in the field of communication.

The obviousness of linguistic communication, and the fact that we participate in it spontaneously everyday, that we communicate incessantly, does not, however, make language transparent. The universality arising from the apparent obviousness of language does not mean there is a lack of intriguing issues connected with communication. These issues absorb a rather small number of researchers (taking into consideration whole human population), but they are very wide-ranging: from the psychological and sociological conditions for success or failure in communication, to the very possibility and structure of communication. Whether understanding those and other issues can be useful for anything is another problem, secondary to cognitive curiosity.

The very material reality of communication (like the reality of the human world in general) offers resistance, however: that which is to be examined is something that everybody – researchers included – is immersed and involved in. Beside this, communication has a dynamic character – it changes due to the fact it is built by active subjects. Therefore, the results obtained could never reach the status of indisputable and general laws. However, this does not mean that we cannot identify the qualities necessary for formulating conclusions, diagnoses or explanations – or even for arguing about definitions.

The crucial thing in the problem of communication is the understanding of language, since it is its basic medium. One of the most important proposals for considering this issue is Donald Davidson's conception of interpretation, which aimed to clarify mutual understanding between people. It was first formulated in the essay *Radical Interpretation*, then developed in a number of texts, and then perhaps the

¹ Mentalese that I hypothetically assume there would be something different from the same language called, postulated and analyzed by some philosophers of mind, for example, J. Fodor, *Ekspierci od wiązów. Język myślnski i jego semantyka*, Warszawa 2001.

last time Davidson engaged with this issue was in *A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs*, an essay published in 1986, in which he provided a definitive and straightforward expression of his views on the subject of language – views which had only been implicit in his previous texts. Over a period of several years, he developed and elaborated his theory of speech comprehension, which is in fact also communication. This theory has great breadth and coherence, and is intellectually significant and widely influential. In next section I outline Davidson's theory of interpretation, before later subjecting it to critique.²

The starting point is a simple question about the knowledge which allows simple communication to be understood. In other words, it is question about the possibility of communicating – what enables us to communicate with each other (and, most of the time, successfully)? And although Davidson focused on linguistic expression, his reflections can be applied to other kinds of communication – not only language. Significantly, according to Davidson, the problem is not restricted to utterances in a foreign language, but even applies to language that we could describe as native for the listener. Davidson's question is important as it transcends the obviousness and naturalness of situation, in order to understand the conditions that make such a situation possible at all. Normally, in everyday life we do not ask questions such as these; we simply communicate with each other and only when problems arise might we have to consider how they came about. Then we recognize that someone did not know what they were saying, or wanted to lie to us, or did it unknowingly, unintentionally etc. This does not explain the initial problem, it only resolves the current communicational troubles, without any intention of making a deeper diagnosis.

Davidson begins from point zero – how can I know the meaning of the sentence I just heard? He does not allow that any preliminary knowledge could give us access to meanings that are communicated; he asserts that such knowledge does not exist. However, it is possible to assume some premises which enable a preliminary understanding. Davidson considers the widely accepted assumption that the meanings of words exists as separate entities having predetermined and unquestionable objective status – an assumption that is a major component of philosophical solutions – to be erroneous. There is no reasonable way to establish the existence of such entities—the transcendental counterparts of words, to which words owe their validity. Davidson applies Ockham's razor to argue that beings should not be multiplied unnecessarily – i.e. to understand someone's words we should not have to

² The most complete and most in-depth critical analysis of the American neo-pragmatism from the point of view of cultural studies is J. Kmita, *Jak słowa łączą się ze światem. Studium krytyczne neopragmatyzmu*, Poznań 1995. It is in its own sphere necessarily broader than the subject of this article.

call upon additional beings that require explanation and justification. He goes further, however, suggesting that it is not possible to define the meanings of the words outside of the context in which they were uttered. This is the source of his idea of radical interpretation – in fact, if there are no universal, decontextualised meanings, this entails that every expression is a peculiar riddle, which we try to solve through interpretation.

In order to begin interpretation, despite there being no access to meanings, according to Davidson three premises should be – and can be – assumed. The first concerns truth and employs Tarski's Convention T, which claims that sentence "a" is true if, and only if, *a*. This concise formulation comprises essential intellectual content – it conveys the relationship between language and world. To illustrate this I will appeal to the most popular example used by both Tarski and Davidson: the sentence "Snow is white" is true only when snow is white. The superficially tautological character of this utterance disappears if the quotation marks are considered. They signal that a sentence describing anything (in this case snow) can only be true if it is consistent with the facts. To put it another way, the theory of truth built on the basis of Tarski's Convention T solves the problem of meaning: "it is this: the definition [of truth – M.K.] works by giving necessary and sufficient conditions for the truth of every sentence, and to give truth conditions is a way of giving the meaning of the sentence"³. There is no need to posit additional entities – i.e. the meanings of the words constituting the utterance – and get entangled unnecessarily in the problem of the relationship between the meaning of words and the meaning of the sentences created from them. A significant modification that Davidson introduces to Tarski's intuition is to relativize truth to the time and the person uttering the sentence. "We could take truth to be a property, not of sentences, but of utterances, or speech acts, or ordered triples of sentences, times, and persons; but it is simplest just to view truth as a relation between a sentence, a person, and a time."⁴ Kmita calls this conception of truth is called disquotational, because quotation marks are 'subtracted' in the transition from metalanguage to the object-language which makes statements about reality.

The second assumption refers to the attitude behind recognizing sentences as true: "This is, of course, a belief, but it is a single attitude applicable to all sentences, and so does not ask us to be able to make finely discriminated distinction among beliefs. It is an attitude an interpreter may plausibly be taken to be able to identify before he can interpret, since he may know that a person intends to express

³ D. Davidson, *Truth and Meaning*, in: *Idem Inquires into Truth and Interpretation*, Oxford 2001, p. 24.

⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 34.

a truth in uttering sentence without having any idea *what* truth.”⁵ This can be put in a slightly different way, namely as trust in the interlocutor: we have to accept (and we are able to recognize, according to Davidson) that our interlocutor is telling the truth (or at least they believe they are); they do not lie. This does not mean that they cannot lie, try to deceive us, consciously or unconsciously try to cheat us, only that if we supposed such a possibility in advance, all of our efforts would be automatically doomed to failure. We have to assume that the interlocutor is truthful, and that their words satisfy Convention T, because otherwise any statement could mean anything at all, and no interpretation will result in success. This is the most basic attitude that can be adopted in relation to the interlocutor.

Finally, the last assumption is the principle of charity. This states that we should make every effort to make other people’s statements understandable and reasonable - we must endeavour to understand that we are dealing with a rational being. Only when our efforts come to nothing, when we are not able to find any meaning in a person’s words (meaning that they are not in fact words) or understand someone’s speech (i.e. it will not constitute an utterance) – only at this point can we be certain that we are not in fact dealing with a rational being.

After positing these assumptions we are able, according to Davidson, to start interpreting utterances. Here we have to consider the purpose of interpreting words. Davidson suggests that the meanings of words (sentences) and the conviction of the person uttering them occupy a single plane. It is a consequence of knowledge that provides speech beyond itself – if we agree with this and we recognize that there is no meaning in any general sense, we must recognize, however, that a person’s beliefs are inextricably tied up with meanings. Convictions make utterances accessible, and utterances do the same for convictions. They are both discovered at the same time. According to Davidson, this is the main reason why interpretation is a radical procedure: we do not have anything that could help us to understand and interpret utterances, and yet we try to do just that by constructing the current communication theory of interpretation.

This approach is inextricably tied up with Davidson’s theory of mental events. There is no need to refer to this in detail, it is enough to point out that the theory leads to a version of holism, in which the beliefs of individuals are interrelated and constitute a coherent, mutually justifying structure. “Having a language and knowing a good deal about the world are only partially separable attainments, but interpretation can proceed because we can accept any of a number of theories of what a man means, provided we make compensating adjustments in the beliefs we attrib-

⁵ D. Davidson *Radical Interpretation*, in: *Inquires...*, p. 135

ute to him. What is clear, however, is that such theory construction must be holistic: we cannot decide how to interpret a speaker's 'There's a whale' independently of how we interpret his 'There's a mammal', and words connected with these, without end. We must interpret the whole pattern."⁶

In the context of such an understanding of linguistic communication, one can get the impression that its existence borders on the miraculous. The number of conditions that need to be met in order for communication to be considered a success is so great, and they are so complex, that only a small number of communicative acts should be considered successful. Probably Davidson intended to shed light on people's mutual understanding, but in effect he arrived at a theory of privatized acts of communication, on the basis of which difficult to conclude how communication in the social dimension can take place.

This concept of personalized communication events is very evident in the presented text of , Davidson's longstanding interest in this topic. In his essay *A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs*, Davidson provides a clear expression of his beliefs about the nature of language and communication: "I conclude that there is no such thing as a language, not if a language is anything like what many philosophers and linguists have supposed. There is therefore no such thing to be learned, mastered, or born with. We must give up the idea of a clearly defined shared structure which language-users acquire and then apply to cases. And we should try again to say how convention in any important sense is involved in language; or, as I think, we should give up the attempt to illuminate how we communicate by appeal to conventions."⁷

Davidson therefore proposes the existence of the evolving theory, a theory which is created by interlocutors for the purpose of their communication and which is valid only as long as that communication lasts. In a conversation, on hearing someone else's words, we have to – making the assumptions highlighted earlier – assign them preliminary meanings, and then – during the process of communication, as we gain more knowledge about our interlocutor – we modify our assumptions and develop them on the basis of new information. There is a slow movement towards mutual understanding and at the end we claim to have actually understood someone's words. This theory, developed for use in specific communication, is valid only as long as the communication lasts. However after the communication is over, if the same interlocutor is met with once again, you cannot just go back to the previous achievements in communication, as in the meantime these people could (and probably do) enter into interaction with others, which could effectively change their

⁶ D. Davidson, *The Material Mind*, in D. Davidson, *Essays on Action and Events*, Oxford 2002, p. 257.

⁷ D. Davidson, *A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs* in D. Davidson, *The Essential Davidson*, Oxford 2006, p. 265.

beliefs, and therefore the meanings that they attribute to spoken words; hence the need to posit a new theory and develop it in the new act of communication. This makes all communication makeshift.

The conception outlined here, though consistent and suggestive, is characterized by one thing, namely that instead of language we have autonomic utterances (and sequences of utterances), the acts of uttering words and sentences, and their senders and recipients. Communication in these circumstances does not seem to be something ordinary and everyday, but rather an almost impossible miracle; the recipient is obliged to understand (and thus reconstruct) the idiolect of the sender – with their beliefs saturating the meanings of words.

According to this theory, we can see that perfect communication and excellent understanding are virtually impossible, they could only be realized in a distant, impossible perspective, and thus we are doomed to a permanent deficit of understanding, or even misunderstanding. Successful acts of communication are unique bright spots on a vast field of disaster. Davidson does not actually say this, but it is not difficult to interpret his thinking in this way.

Although to some extent Davidson reveals our unconscious backstage activity when we hear an utterance, his approach only goes so far in tackling the experience of communication. Similarly, when it comes to language itself, his assumptions and conclusions are only partially correct. On balance, Davidson's theory suffers from a distinct weakness, namely its radically individualised communication, and I shall try to elaborate on this issue.

First, I will try to show that in philosophy, which is Davidson's field of reference, his assumptions and conclusions can be considered as controversial. I will do this briefly, highlighting only the key issues. Controversy in itself does not, of course, constitute an objection to Davidson's theory, but it does serve to indicate that his proposal is extreme in nature.

Davidson refers to Wittgenstein's philosophy of language implicitly but distinctly. However, in his vision of interpretation and communication Davidson omits the context of utterances – the conditions for their formation and understanding – and this is crucial for Wittgenstein; something which cannot be omitted. In considering the problem of language problem, Wittgenstein turned to the pragmatics of usage and ultimately defined language as a social phenomenon, which acquires its meaning through use. For Wittgenstein, language is not top-down data, neither is it an entity independent from language users – the resulting communication is a social product. The arbitrary nature of meaning, does not entail in any obvious sense that everyone can manipulate and modify meanings – the communicative function is superior, as

Wittgenstein's reservations concerning private language show. If one could attribute any meanings to words and create one's own language ('because I feel like it') language would immediately lose its communicative benefits. The person who would make such changes to meaning would thereby fail to take into account an essential requirement – if it is to communicate anything, language must be understood by the recipient. Thus when meanings are known only to me, as I have assigned them, for the recipient my utterance can mean anything or nothing, because only I have knowledge of the meanings. Wittgenstein's conclusion is unambiguous – language is a product of the collective, and there is no such thing as a private language, because it fails to meet the requirement of communicability.

Similarly, in the case of the theory of speech-acts proposed by J. L. Austin, although an utterance is anchored in specific circumstances, it is realized by a particular person, at a given time and in certain conditions. In order to be effective, to realize its illocutionary power, the person performing a speech-act must take into account the common beliefs in the community concerning how to formulate and execute a speech-act and communicate its contents.

I turn now to criticism from other theoretical positions. With the help of the socio-regulative conception of culture proposed by Jerzy Kmita, I would like to take the problem of communication down a different route to that taken by Davidson. Kmita argues that culture is a system of normative-directive beliefs respected by the members of a given community (beliefs saying "what should be" and "how", in other words defining cultural objectives and ways of achieving them). Therefore, every field of human activity is regulated by a set of beliefs. Custom, religion, art and science, and the cultural field of instrumental culture (regulating material practice - production, consumption and exchange) – all these social activities require these beliefs to be shared, in order to function effectively. Otherwise it is difficult to see how any community efforts could be successful, and "remains to assume that the emergence of cultural activities and products (linguistic) as well as their interpretation are governed by the principle of both senders and recipients respecting (recursively) updated normative and directive beliefs, and that - as a result - behind every kind of sender-receiver sphere there is a 'hidden' system of those beliefs".⁸ This is a fundamental and crucial point of this concept – the recognition that effective communication and effective social action depend on a community sharing certain beliefs. Culture forms the foundation of human practices.

The requirement of sharing beliefs is only somewhat mitigated in the sphere of instrumental culture. Whether or not you respect the relevant beliefs, you can still

⁸ J. Kmita, *Kultura i poznanie*, Warszawa 1985, pp. 23–24.

use the products appropriately: "A jar of jam or a pair of shoes can be consumed without respect for the normative and directive beliefs which defined the process of their production (...)"⁹ If action-oriented technical usability is crowned with success it requires no broad social support in the form of consent to the beliefs that led to the success. This does not mean, however, that such consent is socially insignificant when it comes to recognizing this or that practice as socially acceptable.

From the perspective of this theory, language is an area of culture of paramount importance because it is the primary medium of communication: "Without this communication, without acts of transmitting and receiving relevant information through language, all social practice of any kind would be impossible, from the religious to the 'material'".¹⁰ Language, as a system of beliefs that relates the meanings of individual words and the utterances formed from them, requires users of the language to share these beliefs, and only this enables effective communication. It is clear that here the language exists and (more importantly) has a social character. Without this community component of language, any attempt to reach agreement on issues, or concerted efforts in any field, would get bogged down in trying to agree on positions and perspectives, on developing a common glossary (though limited to a single project) and flowchart of relationships.

It is important, however, that language is not autonomous in relation to the whole system of beliefs that is shared by the community and regulates the actions taken by its members. The context for considering language should be considered is the culture of which it is part. The whole activity of communication, most commonly implemented by means of language, is made possible by culture, and is in fact activity of a cultural nature.

Thus understood, language has some kind of semantic 'blur', or indeterminateness, which, however, is inevitable and actually guarantees communication. "Perhaps it would be superfluous to show that the assumptions of semantics, which are used by the community, are far from crystallized codifications, as a rule, They change over time, they change in the transition from one member of a given community to another, and are even different for each of member at different times of their lives. The striking exception in this respect the semantic assumptions of axiomatic mathematical theories or any formalized theory. However, it is difficult to doubt that there are in fact social invariables, in terms of these semantics assumptions; if it were otherwise, mutual communication on the basis of language, cus-

⁹ Ibidem, p. 31.

¹⁰ Ibidem, p. 28.

toms, art or science would be a miracle.¹¹ It is easy to understand the basis for such a statement - in the case of formal theory the precision of the semantic assumptions comes at a price: the information that can be communicated is severely restricted. In contrast, with everyday communication the lack of precision in the semantic assumptions is compensated by its high informational content.

From Davidson's perspective, this view of language is unacceptable. It requires that communication should attain unambiguous meanings (or should at least aspire to them). Semantic 'looseness' resulting from the social nature of language, or vulnerability to individual invariants, makes the communication process susceptible to interference and noise. However, it seems that this is not sufficient for arguing that language is inefficient, but only sheds light on the complexity of the communication process in the conditions created by the subjects of human culture.

Besides, in Davidson's approach to language it is possible to detect some inconsistency, in that he seems to have perceived the social character of language, when he wrote that every utterance (and a person) needs a separate theory of interpretation (but constructed on the basis of a general model). Davidson employs statements such as "users of the German language" and "natural language", suggesting there is a basis for a richer understanding than he allows: language with meanings generally shared by the community. In trying not to accuse Davidson of inconsistency one can – or should – explain language usage, or the fact that language tends towards certain formulations – formulations from which Davidson is trying to break free. Suspicions concerning some inconsistencies remain, however, and even the following statement fails to dispel them: "The appeal to a speech community cuts a corner but begs no question: speakers belong to the same speech community if the same theories of interpretation work for them."¹² The suspicion is all the more justified since from the perspective of the psychology of mental events, which ties speaking to beliefs, it is difficult to speak of a linguistic community. Inconsistency finally disappears when Davidson abandons the notion of language "as philosophers understand it."

The usefulness of the theory of culture in the reflection on communication and research on the cultural products products of culture is evident. It enables the actions taken by individuals and groups, and their products, to be grasped and explained to a greater degree than if this assumption is dispensed with (this is with regard to instrumental culture, not taking into account the ontological status of culture).

¹¹ Ibidem, p. 43.

¹² D. Davidson, *Radical Interpretation...*, p. 135.

In the case of the socio-regulatory conception of culture, gaining knowledge of the specifically human domain takes place in accordance with scientific procedure, which is defined as humanistic interpretation.¹³ The dissimilarity perfectly illustrates the difference between Davidson's perspective, which dispenses with the concept of culture and privatizes acts of communication, and the perspective of Kmita, which assumes culture to be the condition *sine qua non* of all human communication.

For Kmita, humanistic interpretation is a procedure for explaining the role of law (or laws), which is the basis for explaining the assumptions of rationality. It states that if there are possible actions that are mutually exclusive and lead to different results, an entity intending to take one of these actions at a specific time will take the step that leads to the most anticipated result.¹⁴ This assumption corresponds to the situation of certainty analyzed in game theory and decision theory. Although this situation is extremely rare – the situation of uncertainty or risk is more common – in practice it allows you to generate conclusions.

The subsequent steps in explaining (interpreting) why certain steps were taken must provide evidence relating to the state of the subject's knowledge and their preferences, or the value system that the action was guided by. The resulting deductions should clarify why this action was taken, and not others, and why it was done in this way, not another way: the answer will be determined by the subject's knowledge (of possible scenarios) and their preferred value system.

The procedure of humanistic interpretation makes room for activity, or its products in cultural space - in fact the interpretation reconstructs the beliefs that were behind the decision to take the action, and take it in one way rather than another. The psychological functioning of the subject is not the point of interest – the interpretation does not establish "what the author had in mind" – but rather the cultural determinants of the action. This does not mean that the acting subjects do not have any goals, but rather that these goals are defined by culture, or at least this is the case with the methods of their implementation. At this point the reference to

¹³ Detail the problems of humanistic interpretation is presented by J. Kmita, J. Kmita, *Z metodologicznych problemów interpretacji humanistycznej*, Warszawa 1971.

¹⁴ In the strict formulation of Jerzy Kmita, and he recognize, that humanistic interpretation is a serious research tool of a deductive, is this assumption as follows: "If X (at time t) take is one of the steps C1, ..., Cn, which on the basis of its knowledge (at time t) cancel and the (total) complete and reliable result - respectively - to the results of S1, ..., Sm ($m \leq n$), and with the results S1, ..., Sm are ordered by the characteristic X (time t) relationship preference, the X (time t) will take action Ci ($i = 1, \dots, n$) associated with the parent (ie. a maximum preferred) result Sj ($j = 1, \dots, m$).", in: J. Kmita, *Z metodologicznych...*, p. 28.

culture gives us a fuller understanding of actions than would explaining them by reference to individual psychological motives.

In addition to the differences in the "spirit" of these two conceptions, there are differences in their intellectual merits. Primarily because these are theories which are applied (in the case of Kmita) or could be applied (in the case of Davidson) as research tools in the humanities. In both cases, these applications would have very different results and, I think, the same could be said of the cognitive benefit.

In the case of Davidson's understanding of the communication process, and his conception of interpretation and psychology, the overall picture of human reality and the way in which it becomes accessible to us, is similar to nineteenth century anti-positivism, with regard to the possibility of scientific knowledge this reality. Thus, humanistic scientific knowledge would be reduced to understanding of individual phenomena in their relationship to the beliefs of the individual, being both actor and author. In true Davidson style, it would be specific, psychological reconstruction of individual events. Davidson's approach does not allow us to go beyond the idiographic level, does not allow the creation of generalizations, or the formulating of broader theories, and would restrict the humanities to case studies.

In turn, after abandoning the disquotational theory of truth for interpreting statements and actions, the interpreter will achieve "results that hold up well (...) in the practice of communication, but only in practice that handling statements on the situation, actions and objectives covered by the standards and directives of culture that I call instrumental".¹⁵

Humanistic interpretation is characterised by the fact that "the interpreter (...) must necessarily establish the cultural-symbolic character of the directive beliefs that are taken into and, therefore, has to make recourse to the relevant cultural community, in particular to the language, and to the appropriate normative beliefs respected in this community".¹⁶ This dimension is not available to an interpreter who follows Davidson, because they are trying to determine the mental events specific to the person interpreted, and context of cultural-social actions taken by this person are of no interest. This dimension is also unavailable because the interpreter rejects the language and the symbolic culture of the community

The issue can also be looked at in this way. Kmita's theory attempts to give an account of the practice of humanistic interpretation, taking into account the cherished beliefs of the community (whatever they are). Davidson's theory adopts the position of fundamentalist-philosophical normativism. The question is: "Do we have to study

¹⁵ J. Kmita, *Jak słowa łączą się ze światem. Studium krytyczne neopragmatyzmu*, Poznań 1995, p. 101.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 143.

culturally regulated practice, or should we also try to improve it from the point of view of certain philosophical assumptions?"¹⁷

The theory of culture plays a fundamental and primary role in both scientific knowledge of the reality of the human world (human worlds), as well as understanding what the essence of communication is.

So what is communication? For Davidson it takes place at the moment when the meanings of the speaker's utterances and their beliefs are established. In other words, when we fully reconstruct another person, we attain knowledge of their beliefs through understanding their words, and vice versa, or to put it another way, when we communicate with another person the identification of two systems of beliefs takes place. Communication is more than just sharing, accepting and adopting beliefs, but is rather a whole range of possibilities that are realized during the exchange of information and the confrontation between this information and our beliefs.

If it assumed that culture is a sphere of beliefs that creates a common space for communication, thanks to the sharing of these beliefs, it is easy to see that consideration for the beliefs of the community, and respect for them during the act of communication, enable effective mutual understanding. Communication is generally effective, although for the demanding it may have a somewhat superficial character. What does this mean? In most cases, we do not try to find out the beliefs of our interlocutor, the important thing is that both sides should feel that agreement has been reached on an issue. This becomes clear when action is taken – if this is done effectively it confirms the success of communication. Appealing to jointly shared beliefs is achieved easily. In this case we are not interested in the beliefs of the individual, and it is not a requirement to achieve a level of knowledge concerning them – it is enough to just reach agreement. Only if communication is disrupted might it become necessary to determine whether both sides share the same set of beliefs important at that particular moment.

Following Davidson, we can admit that in every individual case there is only an approximate identity between the beliefs of individuals and those recognized by the community, but this does not interfere with successful communication, and even this invariability (as I have tried to demonstrate) is a condition for the possibility of an act of communication. Thus there is no need to abandon assumptions concerning the existence of culture and language being the medium of communication in culture, it is necessary to recognize that, when dealing with the communication of individuals, idiosyncrasies can appear. Communication is not something that re-

¹⁷ Ibidem, p. 144.

quires heroic efforts to confront a mysterious interlocutor and their world – if we only stay in the sphere of culture, with its shared and respected beliefs, it is easy for us to communicate.

This image is so idealized, however, that it is easy to provide numerous counter examples of communication problems and failures. However, they are not so much the result of using inappropriate communication strategies or inadequate theories of interpretation, but are rather due to the fundamental ambiguity of language, whose individual elements, following Wittgenstein, can be viewed as tools for various purposes, not as tools intended to implement a single task. On the other hand, the divergent aspirations of individuals – who are far from static beings, who are, on the contrary, constantly emerging – can also significantly influence the results of communication. Finally, this question can be posed: should the success of communication be measured by whether agreement was reached? It is possible that we understood each other but did not agree with each other; however, here the very possibility of disagreement already proves the success of communication.

An additional and important issue in this context is intercultural communication. From Davidson's perspective it does not exist, because culture in general is not taken into consideration, as communication is reduced to individual acts of communication, so cultural diversity is even further from consideration. However, when we accept or just assume the existence of a common cultural space, communication within it becomes somehow understandable, and the problem then becomes how individuals belonging to different cultures can communicate with each other.

The importance of the appropriate approach to the problem of intercultural communication is evident from the problems arising in this area. Applying the concept of culture to understand these problems is an accurate and cognitively vital move.

In his book *Is intercultural communication possible? A culture studies strategy*, Andrzej Zaporowski attempted to highlight this problem with direct reference to Davidson's ideas. He suggests that intercultural communication results in participants sharing similar attitudes and sums up his considerations in the following way: "This postulate [of intercultural communication] is not formulated in terms of necessity, but in terms of possibility. The realities of a multicultural world suggest that it is difficult to achieve, so it becomes a (purely) theoretical possibility. This problem can be conceived as follows: in a theoretical sense the state of intercultural communication is conceivable, and in a practical sense its achievement is unlikely."¹⁸ In the multicultural world, with its mix of different (often contradictory) aspirations and

¹⁸ A. Zaporowski, *Czy komunikacja międzykulturowa jest możliwa? Strategia kulturoznawcza*, Poznań 2005, pp. 154–155.

interests, and ways of reconciling them, finding common ground and removing differences is set (by some) as a global ideal and target. However, as is shown by Zaporowski, this is almost impossible.

I would like to sketch a different solution to this issue (viewing the problems in a similar light, but attempting to resolve them differently). Communication does not have to be the result of sharing an identical set of beliefs - if you reject the holism behind Davidson's view of the human mind, it is not necessary. If we accept that communication allows to exchange of information, we can communicate when we assume a set of cultural beliefs pertaining to a group represented by an individual, rejecting others or distancing ourselves from them. The essential thing is to exchange information. In addition, if we recognize that the effect of communication is not just agreement or the sharing of certain beliefs, but also disagreement or rejection, we can see that each of these possibilities are based in the set of beliefs shared by the humankind.

As a result, efforts to interpret another's beliefs (which is easier with participants of the same culture and more difficult for people belonging to other cultures, because the problem of translation must be taken into consideration, or the relevant convictions determining the action taken must be reconstructed), communication takes place throughout the spectrum of possibilities. These two ends of the spectrum - approval and rejection - cross each other. You can understand perfectly while rejecting someone's beliefs, and not understand while accepting them (although the issue here would be what was accepted?) - to mention only two possibilities.

The recognition that communication takes place in the space of culture, and is not an individual event that takes place between two people, means that communication between people belonging to different cultures must also take account of this dimension - intercultural communication does not take place in a neutral space. This enables a wider grasp all the issues related to intercultural communication. Emerging problems (or rather problems indicated in the context) can be recognized as interference caused by differences in the purpose of what the communication is supposed to achieve at that moment; and the problems may be related to cultural beliefs (e.g. the semantic assumptions regulating the communication) - in other words, the problems are the result of different cultural conditions operating, and are not only a consequence of individuals' personal qualities. This makes it possible to understand them and find solutions for them at a higher level of generality. Additionally, it allows research to cover a broader class of phenomena than just intercultural agreement.

The reality of communication is the domain of subjects and their dynamic character. Today's agreement can turn into tomorrow's discord, and vice versa. There may be various reasons for this: individuals (and groups) cannot be made to be immutable in their beliefs, unreflecting, cherishing permanent intentions and aspirations, and neither it is possible to separate communication (even if is considered as a basic human activity) from other forms of human activity (including those based on it) – the complexity of cultural reality makes its individual components susceptible to the impact of other components.

The approach to intercultural communication outlined here does not offer a simple recipe for how to achieve the state of shared beliefs. This could be because this is just one of a number of possible purposes of communicative activity. This solution however allows us to indicate the diversity of intentions with which we enter into communicative relationships. It also highlights the need to take into account cultural difference in order to achieve understanding (without prejudging outcomes): the greater the extent to which diversity is taken into account and the greater the accompanying effort to reconstruct cultural beliefs, the higher the efficiency of communication. This entails separating the mere exchange of information from the effect we want to achieve. Although intercultural communication is possible and common, it rarely meets all the hopes placed in it.

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