**Intercultural Communication and Related Terms**

* **Intercultural Communication**

Shaules (2007 p.34) argued that

when interacting with people from other cultural communities we are, in effect, interacting with other world views and that surface behavior is tied to deep and hidden networks of meaning, values and expectations that our hosts share with each other, yet which we do not yet fully understand.

Thus, in situations of intercultural communication, the interactants share few cultural representations. Thus, they can be close or distant depending on the number of the shared cultural representations (large/ small), and their centrality (high/ low). The latter refers to the extent to which that cultural representation “is causally efficacious across many spheres of social life” (Žegarac, 2007 p.41) like religious beliefs.

The term ‘intercultural’ highlights the fact that individuals are able to adapt themselves according to the situation (encountering different cultures) without abandoning their values.

* **Intracultural Communication**

In situations of intracultural communication, participants share most and central cultural representations. They do not face difficulty to reach the communicative success. In contrast, in situations of intercultural communication, the participants need some type of accommodation to each the communicative success.

* **Cross-Cultural**

The terms “intercultural” and “cross-cultural” are often used interchangeably; although a close analysis would reveal that they are different. Intercultural research refers to the kind of study by which the behaviour of members of two or more cultures is examined during their interaction with each other. Hence, intercultural communication research aims at studying the process of interaction which has a dynamic nature that allows for the construction of different and complex identities. However, cross-cultural research deals with examining the behaviour of members when they interact with others within the same culture, and compare it with the behaviour of others who belong to other cultures (Spencer-Oatey & Kotthoff, 2007). However, Cross-Cultural competence refers to the individuals’ ability to navigate from one culture to another, but they may have to adopt a different identity each time (LeBaron Earle, 2013).

* **Intercultural vs. Bicultural Speakers**

Because being bicultural takes place in naturalistic settings, individuals are able to understand the meanings, practices, beliefs, expectations… of both cultures i.e. they are part of both cultures. This process underlies degrees or levels of transformation that range between normal second socialization, in one extreme, and ‘re-socialization’ or ‘alternation’, in the other (Byram, 2008 p. 59).

However, being intercultural does not imply an identity transformation; it rather involves the acquisition of knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for successful interaction and mediation between cultures. Such characteristic of acting as mediator is what distinguishes ‘intercultural’ from ‘bicultural’ individuals, i.e. bicultural individuals are not required to act as mediators (Byram, 2008). In sum, three points of difference can be listed;

1. The process of being bicultural takes place in naturalistic setting while being intercultural is gained through education.
2. Bicultural, unlike intercultural, embodies an identity transformation.
3. Intercultural speakers are mediators while bicultural ones are not.

* **Intercultural vs. Multicultural**

Multicultural refers to a society that contains several cultural or ethnic groups; people live together without necessarily being engaged in interactions with each other. Hence, multiple cultural groups tolerate the existence of others and live with them within the same geographical confines. However, intercultural communication focuses on dialogue between cultures and on the mutual exchange of ideas and norms that allow for a deep understanding and respect for the other cultures. Consequently, and in contrast to multicultural situations, in an intercultural society, every one senses change and learns from the others.