Originalveröffentlichung in: Dąbrowska-Burkhardt, Jarochna/Eichinger, Ludwig M./Itakura, Uta (Hrsg.): Deutsch: lokal – regional – global. – Tübingen: Narr Francke Attempto, 2017. S. 433-449. (Studien zur Deutschen Sprache 77)

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A Model for Intercultural Communication: A Revised Draft

1. Introduction: pre-consideration about "communication" and "culture"

1.1 Communication

We understand "communication" as the action of at least two individuals exchanging information through either verbal or non-verbal signs. This paper will discuss about successful communication acts and analyze what sort of impediments can lead to **un**successful communication. Hereby the communication act can be regarded as successful if the transmitted information maintains the same or approximately the same contents when received.

1.2 Culture

Based on Klaus Hansen, we will understand the "culture" as the standardization of mental and physical behavior in a collective in a society. These can be large "collectives", like "nation" or "folk/ethnicity" with "national-spirit" or "ethnicity", and moving down to the smallest one, "family" with concepts such as "family traditions". Under this definition, individuals are inevitably excluded from our discussion, but these individuals belong at once to several collectives like *male-, merchants-* or *smokers-collective*, and so on (multi-collective). By any specific, concrete communication act, therefore, it is not clear from which perspective one speaks.

1.3 Intercultural communication

When a communication act can be organized only through individuals and the culture can be recognized only collectively, a culture is excluded from the place of communication. We will understand "intercultural communication" as communication carried out by individual interlocutors with different cultural backgrounds.

In the analysis of a concrete intercultural communication act, therefore, we must distinguish between the customs of each interlocutor, the collectives they are to be assigned to, and their own personality. There the individual plays a quasi-role of an agent of the collective while presenting his or her own individual existence at the same time. This is one of the fundamental challenges faced by studies on cultures.

2. model for the monolingual communication

Because I know no model for intercultural communication, I will start from the 1974 Tübinger model designed for an introductory book on linguistics, and modified to correspond to the current state of linguistic and communication research:

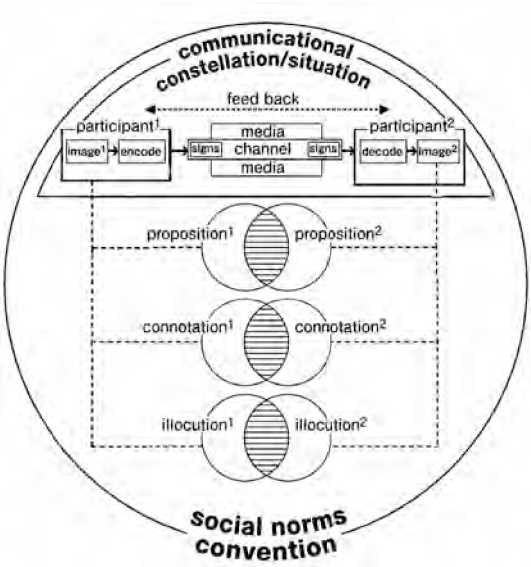

Fig. 1: Revised Tübinger Model

2.1 *Signifiant* and *signifié* in the communication act

Communication aims to share **information** among all participants of the communication act. This information to be transmitted has two sides (*signifiant* and *signifié*). One side has physical features such as sound waves, light waves or haptic acts, e.g., touching of the body. The other side includes the information/meaning. Both concepts referring to the word level (code) by de Saussure are substituted now with *proposition* at the sentence/text level. So now we have three conceptions of *proposition*, *connotation* and *illocution*.

2.2 Proposition and illocution

The term *proposition* has its origin in logic, and we linguists have obtained the concept *illocution* from language philosophers such as Austin who suggested in his book "*How to do things with words*" (1964) that a sentence refers not only to the reality or incident ("proposition") presented through the words, but

also includes another aspect of meaning, intention of utterance ("illocution"). *"Illocution"* is divided further into the subcategories *assertive, directive, commissive, declarative* and *expressive.*[1]

2.3 Connotation

The term *connotation* has gone unchanged since the **Tübinger** Model. This term referred at first to the meaning additionally given to a word, expressing the mental, social relations to the speaker. We see correspondent phenomena at the sentence and text level too. An example would be the Chinese or Japanese passive construction, which originally expresses the demerit of the fact (proposition) presented in the sentence for the subject or relating person. (Cf. further examples later.)

2.4 Constellation and procedure of communication

"Participant[1]" and "participant[2]" in Figure 1 should correspond to the "speaker" and "hearer" in the Tübinger Model, and other possible functions such as writer and reader, and in the singular or in the plural. This was intended to correspond to the reality of communication.

2.5 Production of information

The origin of information to be shared is built first in our mind. An (external or intrinsic) impulse for the information taken into our mind cognitively is processed and takes the form/Gestalt of an *image*. This image is not always the same; each participant in the communication has a somewhat different image so that it is sometimes necessary to confirm the identity of images expressed through words. This confirmation is possible in face-to-face conversation (meaning negotiation). In other cases, e.g., fictional text, we must work solely with mental images.

The image in the mind of participant[1] is transformed to signs (words and sentences). These sentences are then transmitted through a *channel* to participant[2].

2.6 *Channel* and *media*

Channel here means all physical senses activated by a communication act. They are the *audial, visual* and *haptic channels*. Through these channels verbal and non-verbal information is transmitted to the partner.

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[1] Vanderveken (1995, p. 15-17).

The nonverbal information transmitted through these channels is assumed to have the same structure as verbal information, and they are activated simultaneously in a communication act. And I propose the concept of multichannel as Figure 2.

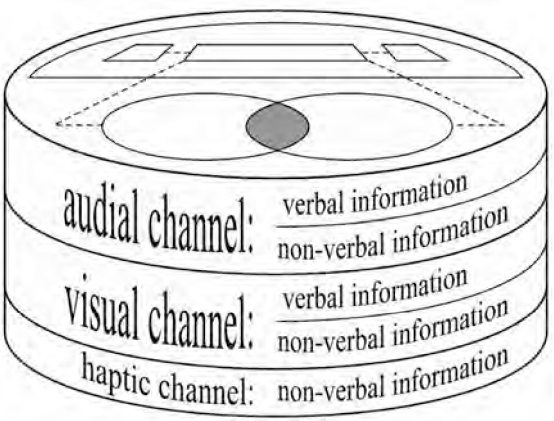

Fig. 2: Multichannel

The term *Media* is introduced to refer to new transmission technology, e.g., E-mail or TV. They exert influences on the contents and structure of information.

2.7 Encoding (verbalizing) and decoding (understanding)

Figure 1 shows the process of encoding and decoding of signs operating simultaneously in three dimensions, namely *proposition, connotation* and *illocution*. It is important to note that not all members of a language society allocate the same image to the same sign. A communication act can be considered as successful when the participants work with their images inside of the intersection of each of the three dimensions.

2.8 Feedback

When one is not sure that one's own image and that of the partner are identical, i.e. when working outside of the striped area, usually a confirmatory action is attempted. An arrow with point at both ends presents the action of feedback. However, it is very difficult to integrate this iterative dynamic movement into our static figures. Therefore I must construct another model, as in the next section.

3. flow chart of communication

3.1 Hundsnurscher's model[2]

Oral communication usually occurs as an exchange of utterances. Hundsnurscher proposes a model for the basic development of a dialogue as below. This model is constructed from very simple general speech acts: **initial speech act** (ISPA : whatever kind of illocution), and two kinds of reply to the ISPA; "**positive notification**" and "**negative notification**". The speech act "**insist**" allows a further development of the dialogue. Positive notification and resignation can end the dialogue. Then a new dialogue can start.

Basic Model

	Turn 1	Turn 2	Turn 3	Turn 4	Turn 5	Turn X
Type	Speaker 1	Sp 2	Sp 1	Sp 2		
I	ISPA: *Will you be my wife?*	PN: *Oh, yes.*				
II	ISPA: *Will you be my wife?*	NN: *No!*	RSI** : *OK, I see.*			
III	ISPA: *Will you be my wife?*	NN: *No!*	INS: *Please be my wife!*	PR*: *Well, if you will make me happy.*		
IV	ISPA: *Will you be my wife?*	NN: *No!*	INS: *Please be my wife, please!*	NN: *No: I'll never think of it!*	RSI:** *OK, I give up.*	
V	IPSA: *Will you be my wife?*	NN: *No!*	INS: *Please be my wife, please!*	NN: *No: I'll never think of it!*	INS: *Please be my wife, I beg you!*	∞
ISPA = initial speech act; PN = positive notification; NN= negative notification; *PR = concession= PN; **RSI = resignation/give up						

Table 1

[2] Hundsnurscher (1994, p. 218).

Hundsnurscher presents an extended model. He sees one more possible step between the initial speech act and the following reply. These steps prepare for a definitive reply, to confirm or to elicit additional information. This indefinite notification is followed by a clarification by speaker 1 and 2. When the indefinite point has been clarified the dialogue can proceed. This clarification act can occur repeatedly, especially in intercultural communication.

	Turn 1	Turn 2	Turn 3	Turn 4	Turn 5
Type	Speaker 1	Sp 2	Sp 1	Sp 2	Sp 1
		Clarifying phase			
I	ISPA: *Will you be my wife?*	IN: *I don't know.*	CL: *What do you mean?*	RP = PN: *Actually yes, but first I must ask my father.*	
II	ISPA: *Will you be my wife?*	IN: *I don't know.*	CL: *What do you mean?*	RP = NN: *No: my father won't let me.*	RSI: *So, I must give up.* or INS: *Please persuade your father and become my wife!*
IN = indefinite notification: confirming question, requiring more information CL: clarifying act RP = Reply to the clarifying question					

Table 2

4 Intercultural communication

4.1 Society or culture

While **intra**cultural communication can be carried out only inside the social norms/conventions depicted with a single circle in Figure 1, we should premise two circles of different societies or cultures with an intersection as in Figure 4 in the section 5.

These societies surely exert influences on communication in regard to content or themes, style and practice. The cultural differences can be the impediments to successful communication.

In cases where the two circles have no common intersection, a communication act is theoretically impossible. But in the reality communication can take place in some way even if the intersection is minimal.

The question is what makes this communication possible. Here I could suggest an additional set which enables the virtually normal communication on both sides. I name this set TOLERANCE-AREA.

4.2 Linguistic/communicative competence

The model in Figure 1 premises the competence of participants approximately as equal in quantity and quality. In a concrete interaction achieved in a sequence of many turns taken, the participants activate their whole range of available competences and knowledge, as the foundation for all understanding: they are general, cultural, situational, behavioral, pragmatic, graphic and linguistic knowledge[3] or competences. (I name them RESOURCE as a whole). However, in reality the participants do not possess these competences in the same quantity and quality. This can be observed even within a monolingual, **intra**cultural interaction, e.g., in a conversation between an educated adult and a young preschool child. This diversity can be ignored to a large extent in **intra**cultural communication, because in adult-child interaction the adult has mastered, in most cases, certain techniques to overcome such diversity. And in other cases too participants recognize the diversity of the partner soon and are ready to make efforts to overcome the gaps and will ask for clarification if necessary. Otherwise he or she will ignore the unclear passage and **tolerate** it, or try to **infer** the partner's intent when possible on the base of their general knowledge. This *cooperative attitude* is fundamental to the successful mutual understanding in general.

In **inter**cultural communication, however, the participants on both sides usually cannot calculate these diverse competences. At the initial encounter they first notice some discrepancies, in most cases through pronunciation. According to their impression they plan their communicative strategy more or less carefully.

4.2.1 Phonetic/sound aspects

The sound system is so basic, and its acquisition demands a long time. The natural acquisition of one's mother tongue usually requires about five years for reaching the standard pronunciation. After the critical period it is very difficult to reorganize this system. In a foreign language, therefor, even a trained

[3] Cf. Doyé (2013, Intercomprehension).

learner often reveals the influences from L1-pronunciation. I can say this from my own experience. The **Automatization** in this area is not completed yet in my case.

4.2.1.1 Phone vs. phoneme

Phonemes merely play the role of meaning distinctions in **intra**-monolingual communication, and whether some sounds are accepted as their varieties depends solely on this function. So long as they do not overrun the border of phonetic realization of other phonemes, they are accepted as **allophones**. But in **inter**cultural communication between non-native speakers, **phonemes** should be considered from another perspective.

For instance, with regards to the distinction between /r/ and /l/, the assignment of these liquid-sounds can be seen as arbitrary. Instead of classifying [r], [R] and [ʁ] as a single group of phoneme /r/, it is possible to handle them as different phonemes. Some German or French people produce the suppository [ʁ] almost as a [χ] in some sound contexts like in *Garten,* as [gaʁten] (uvular). When this vibrant-feature is ignored, or if one has no fine listening ability, it could be classified to the phoneme-group /χ/.

The consideration above shows that in intercultural communication, the phoneme and its relation to phone (realization of phonemes) should be flexibly disposed, namely each phoneme should provide an **extended** sound image from that of its own language.

Imagine a conversation between an L1-speaker of English and a Japanese person speaking English as L2 who cannot distinguish /r/ and /l/. When the Japanese says, "*I lead a newspaper at breakfast. My wife doesn't like it.*" A speaker of English as L1 may not understand the utterance literally and ask back: "*Do you **read** a newspaper at breakfast?*", as in a classroom where the teacher corrects the student's pronunciation indirectly. However, a native or a talented non-native English speaker may be able to interpret the utterance of the Japanese in this direction from the outset. He or she infers what is meant. This inference is easily available, because the act to *lead a newspaper at breakfast* is implausible, going against the semantic valence/collocation. This is a meaning-negotiation, clarifying act. In this case the partner sets up the framework of **temporal** homonyms for *read* and *lead.*

In a communication act between a Chinese and a Japanese, deviations like the above causes no problem when they both speak English as L2, a vehicle language. They will interpret the utterance on the basis of their own languages. Their languages have so many homonyms and /r/ and /l/ always construct a pair of homophones.

These observed actions, named TOLERANCE, are supported by the ability to **infer** on the basis of linguistics and general knowledge. And this tolerance is sustained by a fundamental precondition, **Cooperative attitude,** especially for the intercultural communication.

When, on the other hand, the inference is unavailable, even a cooperative communication would fail.

Since almost only physical components are dominant in the phonological area, the inference is of another nature than that of meaning inference. It demands its own independent graphic as below.

Here the **society** plays a minimal role.

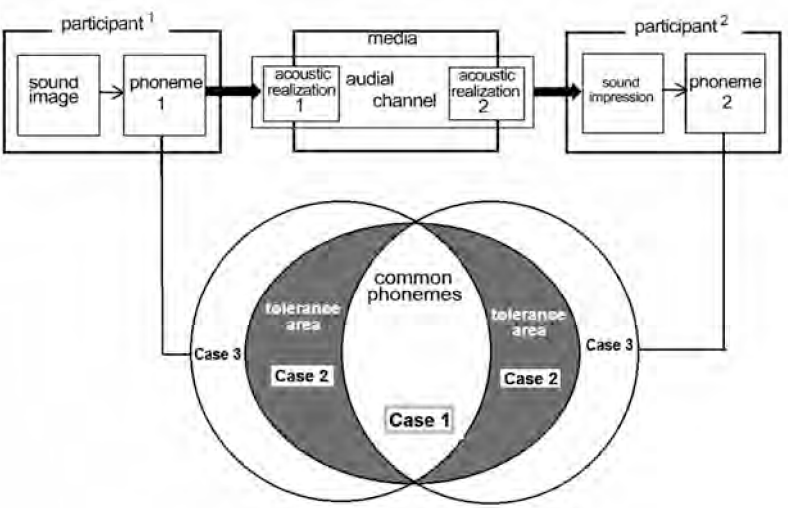

Fig. 3: Phonetic transmission

The relation of phoneme 1 and 2:

- Case 1: When they are identical both in regard to acoustics and phonetics, we will find the phonemes in the intersection of "common phonemes". There the mutual phonological identification is confronted with no problem.
- Case 2: If the phoneme 1 and 2 are not identical, the identification would be difficult, unless both phonemes are tolerated and located as varieties into the intersection "tolerance area". For example /r/ and /l/ build a virtual phoneme /r+l/ in the language in question.

- Case 3: If the interlocutors cannot acknowledge either as varieties, mutual understanding is impossible on the sound level. There should be an alternative expression necessary that allows for Case 1 or 2, in order to continue the interaction.
- For acoustic realization 1 and 2, there is no guarantee that they are the same. The technical diversity, e.g., diverse quality of the transmission and reception equipment cause biased transmission of the sound, e.g., a /r/, can be received as /d/: *Märchen* as *Mädchen*. I often encounter this difficulty in a video-conference.

4.2.2 Formal aspect: vocabulary, grammar

4.2.2.1 Vocabulary

The diversity between the participants in this competence area influences the flow of intercultural communication. The lexical competence of the partner is noticed and evaluated almost simultaneously to the phonetic one. The disposition of *read* and *lead* shown in the previous section would have no function if the partner does not have these words in his vocabulary. Therefore the more competent he is, the more effectively his interlocutor can be helped cooperatively. This cooperation presupposes the ability to **infer** the communicational intention of the interlocutor. The more competent speaker can and should help the less competent partner in their vehicle language in a communication act. It can be meaning-clarifications through questions, or proposals of alternative expressions or interpretations. When the participants have approximately the same level of high competence, mutual helping actions or cooperative meaning construction will be feasible.

4.2.3 Proposition, connotation and illocution

Real communication acts are achieved in a form of discourse, structured from sequences of utterances. They are tangible by the sensors of human beings. However, since *proposition, connotation, illocution* are extracts from the contents of the discourse, they cannot be verified in the sense of positivism.

4.2.3.1 Connotation

When we hear an utterance:

(1) *My father doesn't like Japanese cars.* and

(2) *Daddy doesn't like Jap cars.*

we recognize no difference in the expressed content (proposition). "*My father*" and "*Daddy*" refer to the same person in the relation "father-child" to the speaker. And "*Japanese*" and "*Jap*" refer to the same ethnicity. But the differ-

ences can be seen in the emotional, evaluating attitude to the expressed items. "*Daddy*" expresses a familiar feeling of the speaker to the "*father*", and "*Jap*" a pejorative attitude to ethnicity.

The two Japanese sentences below with different semi-auxiliary verb *ageru* and *yaru* (original meanings of them are "give") respectively refer to the same action (proposition):

(3) *Jack* wa *Jane* no shukudai o tetsudatte **ageta/yatta.** ('Jack helped Jane with her homework.')

"*ageta/yatta*" present different personal relationships between Jack and Jane. The former expresses the friendly spontaneous *helping* action, while the latter the same action includes the *patronizing* character of Jack toward Jane.

4.2.3.2 Illocution

Illocution can be understood as a new, important object for foreign language education and for the research of intercultural communication as well. In regard to the classification of illocution we can find a certain difference between language philosophers and linguists. Vanderweken,[4] a follower of Searle, classifies illocution according to the criteria of whether the factum expressed in dictum already exists at the time of utterance, or happens concurrently, or afterwards, or merely in the mind of the speaker. However, Zifonun et al. see this issue inductively from the real (authentic) dictum and ask what kind of action (*Handlung*) it expected. These different inductive vs. deductive approaches are, I suppose, one of the motivations which prompted the Mannheimer linguists to the reclassification of the illocution *assertive* into *quaestive* and *assertive*, for example. The former was considered by the philosophers as a sort of *directive* which demands an *answer* as a verbal reaction to the given utterance.

The attempts to develop a typology of illocutions since Searle seem to lack theoretical basis, as Zifonun et al. notice. They therefore are guarded about building a general typology of illocution and limit their work to the survey of ascertainable illocutions in authentic German sentences.

For the research of intercultural communication, however, the contrastive analysis of illocution types is indispensable, because one reacts first to the illocution of the utterance, not absolutely upon the expressed proposition. Second, illocution belongs to the area of pragmatics, namely to the culture, and as culture differs from one to another, the type of illocution can vary too. And an utterance can be interpreted in opposite direction, e.g., *apology* vs. *demand/*

[4] Vanderveken (1995, p. 15-17).

condemnation; *courteousness* vs. *arrogance*, depending on the communicative situation (See example (4) below). In this sense it is desirable to consider these issues from the perspectives of rhetoric, which deals with the means to achieve successful communication.

We mean "illocution" as the expected/aimed action of the communication partner stimulated through the utterance of the counterpart. And we distinguish two types of illocutions, the primary and secondary. We have usually no difficulty with the primary illocution because its intention is formulated clearly in the dictum. Here we will observe mainly the secondary illocution which appears in varied realizations.

Below we see an often cited example for primary and secondary illocution:

(4)

Interaction Type 1	Interaction Type 2
A: "It is very warm here!" (a directive, expecting a positive notification/ IDS-Grammatik: *judgement/ confirming* question)	A: "It is very warm here!" (a directive, on the premise of a positive notification, expecting an action to remove the negative fact)
B: "Yes, it is very warm." (an assertive with positive notification)	B: "Shall I switch the air conditioner on?" (a commissive, a proposal)

In Type 1, B gives the positive notification to the utterance of A, in the primary illocution, namely an affirmative answer directly to the content of the question. That would be correct from the viewpoint of school grammar. But from the social aspect it is not adequate, since A is expressing his wish with this utterance. The reaction of B who does nothing, by affirming the question, can be interpreted in two ways:

> B wasn't aware of A's illocution, probably because of lack of socio-linguistic competence.
>
> or
>
> B is rejecting the request made by A, thinking that A has no right to demand something of B in this way, namely A is arrogant.
>
> But if A was B's supervisor, B's reply would mean hostility or insubordination.

However, in Type 2, in contrast to Type 1, the wish expressed through secondary illocution should be interpreted as more courteous than through primary illocution.

One more example:

Child: *Mizu ga nai yō!* (There is no water!)[5]

Mother: *Mizu o kudasai! tte iinasai!* (Say 'give me some water, please!').

The mother's correction of the secondary illocution to "*Mizu o kudasai!*" with primary illocution reflects the rules for the communication as the results of socialization.

But the mother can respond in another way:

(a) *You can go to the kitchen and get it/help yourself!*

or

(b) *Water is in the refrigerator.*

Whether the child can say the same sentence to the father too, depends first on the relations between them. To the father who usually does not set the table, the child could merely express the wish through the primary illocution: "*Please bring me some water!*"

For foreign language learning and intercultural communication, the speech act plays a greater role now, since the focus has shifted to the communicative approach. More studies in this field, from the perspective of contrastive sociolinguistics are called for; who, to whom and when different types of illocution are allowed. This is particularly the case where secondary illocution functions in opposite directions, for example, courteous vs. arrogant ways.

4.3 Impediments in intercultural communication acts

4.3.1 Connotation

If a speaker utters a sentence in L2-English as (2) in 4.2.3.1, the speaker of L1-English will tolerate it, and interpret it as (1). The speaker will assume that the interlocutor lacks the expression for "father", and possesses only the word "*daddy*", for whatever reason. In this case the connotation is neutralized. But if a good L2-English speaker utters the same (2) sentence, the partner would understand it literarily together with the biased connotation. There he will infer insufficient language education, or the real intention, feeling or attitude

[5] The prosody of the utterance or specified indicators in certain languages prompts probably to the interpretation of the utterance as a requirement (an emphasis "*yoh!*" as in this Japanese example).

of the speaker to the object. Or in a stage where the friendship among interlocutors is developed to some intimacy, one partner may attempt to correct it while making fun of the utterance.

But such a case will probably occur rather infrequently. A speaker of a foreign language usually learns the target language in a (language-)school, where **neutral** words and phrases are learnt first in regard to connotation. (Yet this is a problem for Japanese learners, since there are scarcely any neutral expressions in Japanese. Most Japanese expressions are biased through connotation.)

4.3.2 Hidden risks of connotation

In the globalized world, the so-called internationalisms have spread throughout wide regions of the world. It makes international mutual understanding feasible. But some concepts have their own connotation which have their validity only inside the nation/country and can raise misunderstandings: e.g., the concept of a "nation". While Americans are generally proud of their own nation and have some positive connotation to this term, Germans or Japanese can be somewhat skeptical. This difference in attitude to the **same term** can cause misunderstanding or lead to a different conclusion. It is an example of a communication act which has not achieved 100% success.

Similar problems can be seen in regard to some of the so-called *specific notions*[6] like "male", "female", "love/sex", "family", ... "god". These concepts are common or general as far as they are found in almost all languages. But the attitude to them, the connotation or **savoir-être**, can vary from one ethnicity/generation to another. For better mutual understanding it is desirable to conduct more research from this perspective.

4.3.3 Illocution

In an intercultural situation the utterance in (4) can proceed probably in varied ways:

(4') A: *It is very warm here!* ***Could you please switch on the air conditioner?***
B: *Yes; of course!*

Here the request and the reason for it are expressed explicitly in primary illocution. The expression in secondary illocution, therefore an indirect request, has the risk of not being understood and work inadequately in social

[6] Threshold Level (1990).

aspect as in (4). The use of an indirect formulation largely depends on the communicational situation, on the social relation of the communication partners. In addition, they would be used first by advanced language users.

In a communication act in general, what one reacts to depends on the occasion. Of course one reacts to the facts imbedded in the dictum. In a normal situation, however, one reacts often to the connotation or the ways in which the illocution is delivered.

These facts we often experience in our daily life, as we analyzed in the previous sections, seem to shift the focus in intercultural communication. A simple tendency can be recognized as follows: the lower the formal competence in the target language such as articulation, grammar, and vocabulary, the less focus is laid on the connotation or secondary illocution by the counterpart. And the higher the competence in the target language, the more negatively the violation against the standard works.

5. t he third possible intercultural communication

5.1 Intercomprehension

In the intercultural, but monolingual communication, as is often observed, a participant speaks in his/her L1 and the others speak in the same language as an L2. Hereby it is sure that the (educated) L1 speaker has an advantage, since in the L1 one can express one's thoughts and feelings **best**. That means speakers of the language other than their L1 face a disadvantage. The extreme case can be seen in "Foreigner talk", in which the L2-speaker can hardly maintain his opinion against his counterpart sufficiently, but must frequently yield to the L1 speaker.

To resolve this problem, the third possible form is proposed, namely *Intercomprehension*: all speak their own language and understand the other(s)'. There is no need for interpretation between the languages because all participants have sufficient listening competence in all languages to comprehend each other. This form is now being acknowledged as a possible approach to intercultural education and communication, supported by the policy of the Council of Europe and EU to learn two languages in addition to one's own. But its application is limited yet to languages groups with a common linguistic heritage.[7]

[7] Cf. Doyé (2013, p. 342).

5.2 EOLE (Éveil au Langage/Ouverture aux Langues à l'Ecole)

For mutual intercultural understanding, some fundamental premises should be set: above all the awareness of diversity of these knowledges among the interlocutors. This awareness is not easily obtained, because most human beings grow up in a monolingual society up to the school age. To overcome this challenge, one approach is initiated in the French speaking Switzerland and now practiced in other several countries as well.[8] In these schools, EOLE pupils should acquire the fundamental senses for the intercultural and interlingual communication; *openness* and *respect to otherness, tolerance, cooperative attitudes*. And these attitudes combined will sustain the intercultural competences, promoting parallel competences in their own language and culture.

6. a model for intercultural communication

In Figure 4, I will present my model for successful intercultural communication, which should serve as the conclusion of my discussion.

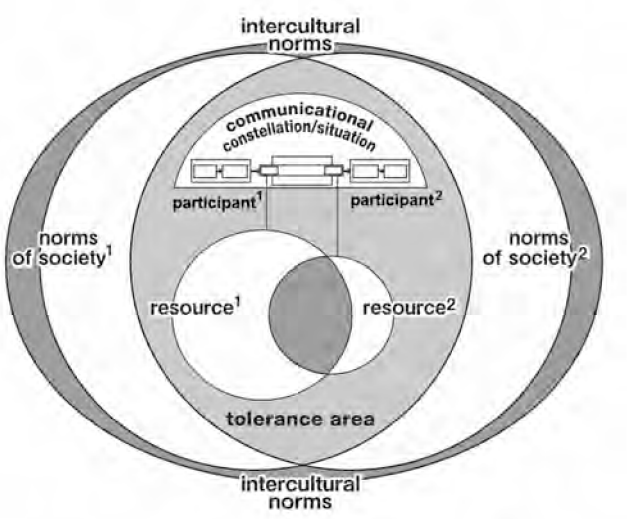

Fig. 4: Intercultural Communication

– Communication takes place inside the intersection of the different norms of different societies. What is located in this intersection (Tolerance area) can be tolerated by both participants, and contributes to mutual understanding.

[8] Cf. Perrgaux (2013).

- The information sent from participant[1] is interpreted by participant[2]. The interpretation is actualized inside the intersection of resource[1] and of resource[2].
- The quality and quantity of the resources can be unequal, but can be enlarged during the interaction (even temporally through tolerance).
- The intersection of the norms of societies in question can be widened and enlarged through the repeated cultural exchanges temporally or even definitively.
- Intercultural norms exist not yet in a visible form, but the sprout of these **intercultural norms** already exists to some extent when we are ready to accept manners that are not familiar in one's own society.

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