

Intercultural Communication and Speech Style

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**Fee-Alexandra Haase,
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Abstract: In her article, "Intercultural Communication and Speech Style," Fee-Alexandra Haase discusses intercultural communication as a concept for the production and analysis of speeches and written texts. Starting with a theoretical and historical perspective, Haase exemplifies selected intercultural patterns found in different cultures. Further, based on definitions of style in rhetoric from different cultural backgrounds from the ancient Greek culture up to modern approaches of rhetoricians, Haase proposes a concept for the analysis of texts employing aspects of rhetoric as an intercultural concept. Haase locates in her concept methods of composition used for the analysis of texts and spoken words within the tradition of style books and scholarly literature thus providing evidence of the development of style conceptualization. Finally, Haase proposes that the analysis of the main qualities of utterance (speech or text) others or we ourselves use can help as an adjustment within the intercultural conditions of discourse.

Fee-Alexandra HAASE

Intercultural Communication and Speech Style

In this paper, I discuss selected aspects of rhetoric as a concept of intercultural style for the production and analysis of speeches and written texts in three perspectives. My discussion is based on definitions of style in rhetoric from ancient Greece and Rome and their continuation in European cultures, in particular in German-language scholarship (see, e.g., Heinrich Lausberg's classic *Handbuch der literarischen Rhetorik* or the more recent volume with papers covering the history of rhetoric in several cultures, Gert Ueding, ed., *Rhetorik*). Further, I propose a concept for the analysis of texts assisted by rhetorical elements as heuristic means for intercultural situations and within intercultural discourse. Stylistics is the theory and application of forms of any linguistic entity. Concerning classifications of style (in Greek *lexis*, in Latin *elocutio*), Thomas E. Kinney used the term "types of style" and I follow this category of classification for a differentiated view upon style concepts. I consider stylistics as a sub-category of rhetoric, also called elocution (*elocutio*). The term "style" used for the equality of text structures stands for certain characteristics of texts or their components, which are qualities of any text and refer to the pragmatic use of language. Such a style is the verbal or written linguistic form performed by the selection of certain specific linguistic patterns. With two basic criteria for types, text-internal criteria of rhetorical stylistics and the extrinsic criteria of a type of style, we can classify texts. The art of applying rhetorical figures was used in antiquity for the production and analysis of literature and speech. Knowledge of the most important instructions and stylebooks of rhetoric is still essential for their understanding. This application of certain literary styles is different compared to so-called colloquial language (as long as we do not consider colloquial language itself as a style). The stylistics of intercultural speech art are concerned with the effects of language and with the relationship between cultures of different languages and social behaviours. General stylistics is interested in the variations of style of a language. Fields of stylistics include word choice, intonation, rhythm, syntax, and similar characteristics. Figures of style serve as decoration and varied modes of expression in texts and speeches deviating from more simple linguistic forms. Rhetorical figures are in the broadest sense deviations from the straight, simple, and plain mode of single words, e.g., deviations from the simple position and order of word groups or deviations from the common way of communication. Rhetorical figures and tropes are standardized deviations from natural speech and they have direct influence on the text as its decorum (*ornatus*). Edward F. McQuarrie and David Mick write that "Figures deviate but do not err" (<<http://lsb.scu.edu/~emcquarrie/rhetjcr.htm>>). But not every deviation is a figure: "For a deviation to be a figure, it must be possible to define the deviation independent of any individual occurrence" (McQuarrie and Mick (<<http://lsb.scu.edu/~emcquarrie/rhetjcr.htm>>)). This is an interesting and helpful statement for my argument, since it is a part of the "ubiquity of rhetoric" and that involves also cultural and intercultural conditions of speech.

Stylistics represent the use of rhetorical figures for the production of texts regarding their linguistic-stylistic organization for the effect of being a guarantee of their persuasive purpose. As a theory of text reception and interpretation, stylistics is a theory for the analysis, interpretation, and evaluation of texts. The word "style" itself has a long history and many meanings. Its etymological roots bring us back to the Latin word *stilus*, an instrument made of metal or bone for writing on wax boards. The first attempts for the distinction, designation, and systematisation of figures were made in ancient rhetorical handbooks. One application was poetry: in ancient Greek and Latin, the position of a word is free particularly in poetic language and this possibility of variations permitted a multiplicity of figures for word positions. In any language the appropriate use of figures is possible according to the specific linguistic structure and patterns. In order to correspond to all effects of intentions, Greek and Roman rhetoric developed systems as guidelines. Since the fifth century B.C., rhetoric was didactical and scientifically treated by Gorgias of Leontinoi, Isocrates, Aristotle, Theophrast, Hermagoras of Temnos, and Cicero. However, only the three-style concept of Theophrast has survived in the history of rhetoric and literature. The three-style concept differentiates between the simple, the plain, and the superior great and pathetic styles. The three-style

levels used by Theophrast and Cicero for speech differentiate between the simple, middle, and high style levels.

We encounter certain linguistic characteristics of speech in all cultures independently from cultural backgrounds and one of these is rhetoric. In any language we find expressions or discourse elements located beyond the level of normal expressions, e.g., metaphors. As stylistics, rhetoric is involved in the development of prose literature: rhetoric is the term for the theory and practice of human eloquence in public and private affairs, whether in verbal, written, or medial form. Their theoretical conditions are based on speech ability as a general issue of human nature (*natura*) which can be presented by art (*ars*) and knowledge (*doctrina*), as well as by experience and exercise (*exercitatio*). According to Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria*, rhetorical instruction is based upon the appropriation of the rhetorical knowledge (*doctrina*), the imitation of exemplary models (*imitatio*) with the goal of exceeding it (*aemulatio*) (Quintilian <<http://www.forumromanum.org/literature/institutio10.html>> 1, 2, 26). Rhetorical stylistics is the theory and science of the organization of linguistic expressions whereby stylistics as pragmatic guideline investigates in different genre styles, e.g., group styles and individual styles. The spectrum of stylistics covers three levels: a) methodical stylistics is the theory of the text analysis and description of literary works, b) normative or practical stylistics gives guidance to a functional writing style, and c) descriptive stylistics analyses or describes linguistic phenomena. Starting from a methodical overview of the methods of analysis we can describe some specific intercultural phenomena and practical guidelines in intercultural communication situations. When concerned with linguistic expressions of a foreign culture, we can use rhetorical figures as means. Rhetorical figures are standardized deviations from natural plain speech level. The aim of figures is to direct the attention to the effective reception of a statement. The elocution, the rhetorical style theory, uses a code for finding language figures both for the rhetorical and for the aesthetical goal. The tropes represent lexems with a connotation of other lexems not mentioned *expressis verbis*. With word figures the speaker/writer deviates consciously from the direct sense of a word, e.g. by repetition, modification or amassment of words or word sequences with the same or similar meaning. Figures form the two fundamental levels of any language, which in each case is communicative beyond the level of the lexical meaning, but still referential to grammar.

For example, the word "castle" is on a normative lexical level a specific expression for an ancient type of building. In the proverb "My house is my castle" there exists a large field of connotated meanings such as "home," "safety," and "might." Here is another example: the Chinese word *dao* means "way" and is used as abstract concept for an ideology. Someone not sharing the cultural background concept of these linguistic expressions would not be able to understand the meaning "behind the words" in the proverb of the first example or the concept in the second example. Concepts of stylistics occur also in the modern trend of such as tropes, word figures, and thought figures based on the categories of addition, replacement, exchange, and omission for the classification of figures. *elocutio* is independent from cultural conditions of the change of matters (*res*) into words (*verba*) by style. Thus, the style of narratives, speeches, and other genres follow specific guidelines. For example, in the Renaissance the Jesuit Jacobus Pontanus still relayed on the three virtues of narration (*virtutes narrationis*): *brevitas*, *perspicuitas*, *probabilitas* (Pontanus <http://www.uni-mannheim.de/mateo/camena/pont2/books/pontanusinstitutiones_2.html> 73). Rhetorical figures and tropes, i.e., standardized deviations from natural speech are directed towards to attention on the statement: this is the Western concept of speech.

Social order and historical change in politics and economics, religion, science and technology, literature, cultural practices, and everyday life are influential for the linguistic value, contents, and form of texts. Rhetorical figures are linguistic patterns where the cultural needs or traditions to communicate are expressed. Rhetorical figures were used in ancient Greek rhetoric for democratic discourse and they still represent forms of a basic need of democratic societies. On the other hand, style can be an indicator for an ideological background. Style terms guarantee that a statement can be formulated linguistically with the same meaning in different ways. Style is crucial both as a part of the formal organization of a text and for its contents. Descriptive style terms guarantee that stylistic characteristics are important indicating the social affiliation of the speaker/writer.

Consequently, the relevant question is how language can be used and analyzed as a resource of different cultural values. Specific discourse features of speech can be compiled and categorized according to the needs of intercultural understanding. Since we find various types of discourse in different cultures, we should look for possibilities of similar or unifying rhetorical techniques as simple communication patterns in international communication situations. Intercultural rhetoric can have the definition as a network between cultural tradition with skills and methodologies brought into use in order to communicate with particular audiences in a specific culture. Thus a certain metaphor is used in a certain culture or time or group of speakers with a specific meaning. When we have a speech situation with an access only permitted for privileged language participants or when only certain groups of people are allowed to use it, it is a specific communication situation where we can ask for the "meanings behind the words," e.g., by reducing the contents of information to a clear minimum data level of the message. Depending on changing political, social, and cultural conditions, there are always new attempts in the history of applications of rhetoric when classifying and listing those figures.

Brett Zimmerman composed a catalogue of rhetorical and other literary terms from American literature and oratory. Zimmerman made concerning U.S. speech the statement "the tradition of stylistic eloquence found no place in a so pragmatic culture" (Zimmerman <http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m2342/is_4_31/ai_53479816>). Jed Rubenfeld notices that the phrase "freedom of speech" is stronger in US-American society than in many other nations. Rubenfeld mentions that an individual has the constitutional right in the United States "to make statements in favor of Nazism that might land the person in jail in Germany" (Rubenfeld <http://wwics.si.edu/index.cfm?fuseaction=wq.essay&essay_id=56056>) and Gloria Greene mentions a specific "American speech" as a cultural basis of linguistic style (Green 438). The contradiction of these statements can be solved when considering the US-American speech style as a speech style of low aesthetic *decorum*, but stylistics related to its direct political democratic efficiency and national interest. So how would we classify cultural linguistic levels of different languages? The linguistic concept of surface and superstructure of linguistic phenomena demonstrates intercultural borders: When two styles containing typical cultural expressions are very different, most cultural differences lie below the surface of linguistic knowledge. One example is the transfer of languages in translation when the translator is not aware of the cultural context of the target language, but uses it only "on the surface" with the linguistic pattern of the original language. Language-immanent logic is not available on the same level in all languages. We have for example logical languages such as Latin, French, and German while languages of a middle level of logical structure such as English have a rich idiomatic vocabulary. Ulrike Schwab used the concept of *autopoiesis* for the exchange between culture and the self. Drawing on recent debates in cognitive psychology and object relations theory, she explores literature's relationship with the formation and transformation of a sense of the self. Poetry, fiction, and related arts generate a certain "cultural idiom" providing abstract shapes that resonate with, refine, or transform culturally prevalent emotions, moods, tastes, values, and mental structures (see Schwab 161). Even the linguistic patterns of one's first language can have an influence on the communicative style as a pattern of self-reference to the cultural surrounding when speaking in a second language.

Among other factors, effective communication depends on the parameters of the communicative parties' cultural backgrounds. In other words, cultural interferences in communication are based on cultural as well as linguistic differences between the languages and their linguistic concepts. Figures overlay the primary grammar as secondary structures producing new meanings and make a speech harder to be understood by persons with no experience writing in these language patterns. The relation "literacy vs. orality" concerns the question "which medium is the best to be chosen for communication exchange?" There is a difference between cultures regarding the question how information is to be delivered. Also the importance of literary texts, e.g., documents, for real use is different. Western cultures, especially Europe, rely on written documents, while in Asian cultures written texts are often considered as negotiable for further work processes and are often modified versions of reality. The main forms of "continuing media" are spoken texts, written texts, and visual texts. They can be arranged in several forms by changing and establishing alter-

native forms continuously. Thus, choosing a form of a "text entity" the participating groups have in common is one "tactic" to make communication efficient. The communicator must decide if and when informations are to be delivered using spoken or written means. An effective way of communication in order to exchange information is the reduction of messages to a minimum volume of data. In a second step, the information can be presented in the way it meets common cultural background, e.g., depending on the decision whether to deliver the information orally or in written form. The relatively impersonal separation of message and messenger is typical and accepted in business communication situations. If we have our "package of information" to be sent to a receiver in another culture, we should care about the "cultural format" to put our data in. We can ask: is there a format the culture of the sender and the culture of the receiver share and therefore can be considered as a potentially successful medium? But not always can we identify clearly and draw the lines between cultures. In many countries we find multicultural societies, where work on cultural assumptions may not work efficiently. This is the case in Western countries, North and South America and Europe, while Asian countries are more homogeneous in this context. Western countries are generally more task oriented. Asian and South American countries are relatively more relationship oriented. The types of communication situations are important for decisions in terms of speech style: is this a situation of communication in business or is it a private communication situation? In Western cultures there is differentiation between the two types of communication situations, while in Arab and Asian cultures business and private speech are related to each other and considered as an advantage for the individual. On the other hand, international work environments involve pools of diverse cultural behaviour or have their own "internal" work-communication ethics as guidelines. Criteria for cultural background checking of main categories such as "individualism & collectivism," "task orientation & social orientation," or "direct communication style & indirect communication style" may be used as orientation guidelines, but bear the danger of reduplication of stereotypes. Thus, as William B. Hart suggests, culture is an important element in communication: "It must be noted at the outset that intercultural communication study is being defined here as the area of study that attempts to understand the effects of culture on communication" (<<http://web.odu.edu/webroot/instr/AL/wbhart.nsf/pages/histICC>>). In our era of globalization, this attention to culture in communication becomes crucial in order to understand the complex use of culturally developed styles and language patterns. In particular, when it comes to the processes of cross-cultural conflict resolution, the analysis of typical style or other speech concepts give facilitate mutually successful communication. Consequently, linguistics as theory, method, and application of bridge building contains means for the strategies of identifying and resolving conflicts. This is why I argue that it is important to understand the use of styles and rhetorics in general.

Erasmus of Rotterdam mentions in his *Epistolae* that the style of a letter (*epistolicus stilus*) must be simple and he uses the letters of Plinius Cecilius as examples of an accurate and elegantly expressed Latin style (Erasmus <<http://www.grexlat.com/biblio/brevissima/textus.html>>). Although this style is highly artificial, it is of a sophisticated style of ease and directness. In the course of time, by the twentieth century, style concepts were established as a discipline located between a general science of language science and the scholarship of literature. The theory of stylistics developed in the nineteenth century to the independent discipline of aesthetics, but also became a part of general education. In German-language scholarship, where the field achieved high currency, seminal texts of this period are Christian Friedrich Falkmann's *Practische Rhetorik* (1849), Adolf Calmborg's *Die Kunst der Rede* (1885), and Friedrich Beck's *Handbuch der Poetik* (1896). Historically, in the eighteenth and nineteenth century, manuals for use in university education and research functioned for the interests and the establishing of national languages. The decrease of ancient philological traditions and the transition from the focus on the humanities to the sciences began in the eighteenth century and the adjustment towards rational argumentation established itself. With the documentation of *termini technici* in textbooks for schools and universities a system of rhetoric in German high-level language was established. The German history of stylistics is also a paradigm for the two main cultural developments of twentieth-century in European cultures, aestheticism and individualism. Parallel to this development, the theory of stylistics

developed from the field of rhetoric and its theory of normative style principles to a phenomenon of the individualized work of a speaker/writer. Central categories of stylistics became expressions of the author and supra-individual categories such as national, historical, and social contexts. Thus, style became a starting point of the work-immanent interpretation of an author. In general, style has become an established field that reached beyond educational practices and scholarship so that Gustav Theodore Fechner wrote in his *Vorschule der Ästhetik* that "Style is like taste. One speaks about a bad and good taste; but in a literal sense taste is just good taste. One speaks about good and bad style. One honours a person by saying that she/he has style; one uses 'tasty' and 'stylish' only in a positive way for objects of pleasure. We honour a person, when we say he or she has taste and a piece of art, when we say it has style. One uses tasty and stylish only with a positive meaning for objects of pleasure. But what is style in a more comprehensive way, when one can only speak about a bad style, the common thing of a good and bad style? I mean, in the most comprehensive way a style is a in any way common point of view form of representation for the plurality of different kinds of artworks or works anyway. The similarity can be founded in the nature of a subject, which gives different works the same looks, and lets us rediscover the human inside the work" (<<http://gutenberg.spiegel.de/fechner/vaestht2/vaesth26.htm>>; my translation) / "Es ist mit Stil wie mit Geschmack. Man spricht von einem schlechten und guten Geschmack; aber in einem engeren Sinne versteht man unter Geschmack nur einen guten Geschmack. Man spricht von schlechtem und gutem Stil; aber in einem engeren Sinne versteht man unter Stil nur den guten Stil. Man lobt einen Menschen damit, daß man sagt, er hat Geschmack; und ein Kunstwerk damit, daß man sagt, es hat Stil; gebraucht geschmackvoll und stilvoll beide nur in gutem Sinne von Gegenständen des Gefallens. Was aber ist der Stil in dem weiteren Sinne, wo noch von einem schlechten Stil gesprochen werden kann, das Gemeinsame des Stils in schlechtem und gutem Sinne? Ich meine, im weitesten Sinne ist Stil eine, aus irgend einem Gesichtspunkte gemeinsame, Darstellungsform für eine Mehrheit verschiedenartiger Kunstwerke oder Werke überhaupt. Die Gemeinsamkeit kann in der Natur des Subjekts begründet sein, welche seinen verschiedenen Werken dasselbe Gepräge aufdrückt" (<<http://gutenberg.spiegel.de/fechner/vaestht2/vaesth26.htm>>).

Next, I introduce briefly alternative guidelines for a rhetorical style which would assist us in the understanding and successful construction of parameters of intercultural communication. In particular, Buddhist principles of style are relevant because their ethical concepts are foregrounded, an aspect that could enrich intercultural communication. In Buddhist principles we find a close relation between ethical behaviour and a "perfection" of speech. The ethical concept of life conduct is based on several "paths" as a basic ideological construction. Speech in the Buddhist conception has the three functions of to be true, real, and useful. Geshe Rabten Rinpoche lists the eight-fold path of the ethical conduct of life as follows. Perfect view, Perfect resolve, Perfect speech, Perfect conduct, Perfect livelihood, Perfect effort, Perfect mindfulness, and Perfect concentration (<http://www.fpmt.org/teachings/more/5paths_rabten.asp>). The basic Buddhist concepts rest on the Four Noble Truths, which include the idea of "perfect speech." The First Noble Truth is that life is suffering mentally and physically in the forms of sickness, injuries, aging, death, tiredness, anger, oneliness, frustration, fear, and anxiety. The Second Noble Truth is that it is craving that causes all these suffering and that a self-centered person with continuous expectations from others will cause mental unhappiness. The Third Noble Truth is that all sufferings can be overcome and avoided. When one gives up endless wanting and endures problems that life evolves without fear, hatred, and anger, happiness and freedom will then be obtained. The Fourth Noble Truth says that there is a Noble Eight-fold path leading to overcome the suffering. In this conception, the expected utterance in speech includes abstinence from lying, abstaining from tale-bearing, abstaining from harsh language, and abstaining from vain talk. Here is an example from Buddha's texts: "right speech, let me tell you, is of two kinds: 1) Abstaining from lying, from tale-bearing, from harsh language, and from vain talk; this is called the 'Mundane Right Speech,' which yields worldly fruits and brings good results. 2) But the abhorrence of the practice of this four-fold wrong speech, the abstaining, withholding, refraining there from-the mind being holy, being turned away from the world, and conjoined with the path, the holy path being pursued-: this is called the "Ultramun-

dane Right Speech, which is not of the world, but is ultramundane, and conjoined with the paths. Now, in understanding wrong speech as wrong, and right speech as right, one practices Right Understanding; and in making efforts to overcome evil speech and to arouse right speech, one practices Right Effort; and in overcoming wrong speech with attentive mind, and dwelling with attentive mind in possession of right speech, one practices Right Attentiveness. Hence, there are three things that accompany and follow upon right attentiveness"

(<<http://www.paganlibrary.com/etext/buddha-word/index.php>>. When Buddha is mentioned as speaker, we must clearly state that this is neither an authentic speech nor style. Such an orally transmitted form is an eminent criterion of speeches claiming to be ideological or sacred and containing any meaning(s) beyond the plain linguistic one. Also Islam relies on orally transmitted texts as testimonies and the Quran consists of orally transmitted *hadith*. Speech in the Buddhist conception has the qualities of being true and useful. So we find here a combination of speech qualities that in the Western categories is divided into rhetoric and philosophy. When in a speech communication situation with this cultural background, the speaker can be aware of speech expressions of this cultural context. The contemporary use of intercultural speech communication differs from the classical tradition of oratory in terms of elocutionary media. Postmodern communication utilizes and develops classical rhetoric techniques with additional elements such as modern information technology such as e-mail, the internet, sound, graphics and images, as well as texts to maximize its function of persuasion. But still on the basic level of human communication styles of speeches influence the level of communication. In general, the more information shared with others a message contains, the more effective the communication will be, while misunderstandings and lack of knowledge reduce the output of effective communication.

Conditions of the relativity of effective communication can also be described as a process of inversion in which the lower the specific cultural qualities are chosen, the more positive impact they will have for the general cross-cultural understanding of the message. On the other hand, the message has to be composed in a more complex way, e.g., with a high volume of terms not only known to a certain group that uses them. The level of a speech depends upon the style elements. The higher the level of the style it is, the less easy the information can be understood. For example, a metaphoric text is related to a concrete fact and lets the fact appear "in another light," where interpretation becomes necessary. A low level of stylistic elements intends to make a text easy to understand, since there is just one meaning of the text. Other meanings derived from rhetorical elements do not make an interpretation necessary. The elocution is of special importance, since its code produces (connotes or decodes) language figures both in the rhetorical and the aesthetic contextual form. Different cultures may not have the same type and approach of communication, but all use rhetorical figures. The use of certain linguistic patterns depends on national, historical, and sociological factors we can call "cultural disposition." The form of the dialogue style used for communication is "intercultural," since it is the most common way of sharing informations. However, the concrete aims of dialogues vary in different cultures: among the types of styles, the personal style was in Western cultures developed and found its standardized forms of representation, e.g., in the letter. As contemporary standardised forms of group style we can consider the public relation text style guidelines for companies to present their corporate identity to the public in advertisement campaigns. The style of an era or époque can be seen as a fashion, but also as an expression of the social state in a certain time and place. When involved in a speech situation the awareness of speech differences is a first approach to the needs of effective speaking. The analysis of the main qualities of speech others or we use can help as an adjustment within the cultural and intercultural conditions of discourses.

Following my discussion for selected aspects of rhetoric as a concept of intercultural speech style we see that differences in communication involving different cultures, speech, and style are based on different cultural concepts. To arrive at an appropriate and mutually inclusive approach we need to ask the questions of if and how the linguistic utterances of one culture are related to a cultural concept and if and how this is to be transferred into another culture's linguistic concept. This aspect remains the question and main problematic in rhetoric concerned with the relation between things (*res*) and words (*verba*). Style is -- since it touches both the area of a "real world"

culture and the linguistics of speeches an important category for the success of any linguistic -- and thus cultural -- operation.

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