

Exploring Interculturality: Insights into Culture, Diversity, and the Encounter between Cultural Realms

استكشاف التعدد الثقافي: رؤى حول الثقافة والتنوع والتلاقى بين المجالات الثقافية

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Abstract:

This research seeks to examine the two patterns of the center and the margin, and the culture that each contains in opposition to the other, starting with monitoring the components of the culture, its value-based secretions, and its social, intellectual, and existential systems, all the way to the counterculture it has produced. The research seeks to clarify the forms of intellectual and substantive employment of the marginalized subject according to a cultural reading that highlights the effectiveness of cultural patterns and their implications contained in poetic discourse in all its manifestations. Because of its role in producing the meaning inherent in societal culture based on the absence of value standards.

Keywords: Culture; cultural diversity; culturology; language; interculturality

ملخص البحث:

الهدف من هذا المقال هو توفير رؤية في المفاهيم الأساسية في مجال الدراسات الثقافية التفاعلية، مع التركيز الخاص على المفهوم الثقافي والتنوع الثقافي ولقاء العوالم الثقافية المختلفة. يتطلب توليف النظريات المتعلقة بهذه المفاهيم نهجاً متعدد التخصصات ومتعدد الثقافات. نظراً للمجموعة المتنوعة من التخصصات والأفكار التي يغطيها مصطلح "ثقافي تفاعلي"، فإن استكشاف شامل يتطلب تبني منظورات وتيارات نظرية مختلفة. يتطلب أيضاً اختيار وتحليل النظريات المحددة لتحقيق البيستمولوجي في هذه المفاهيم. من المهم أن نلاحظ أن هذا المقال لا يدعي تقديم معالجة شاملة لموضوع النقاش. بل يعمل كمقالة تهدف إلى تقديم نظرة عامة على بعض النظريات والمفاهيم التي تم تطويرها في مجال الثقافة والتفاعل الثقافي. في هذا السياق، يتم فهم "التفاعل الثقافي" بأنه يعمل على مستويات الفرد والمجتمع، مع التركيز على طبيعة عملية لا حدود لها تؤدي إلى تأسيس "مجتمع تفاعلي ثقافي". يكشف هذا الاستكشاف أن فهم التفاعل الثقافي، مثل أي تعريف آخر، لا يزال غير مكتمل تماماً ويمكن أن يختلف في المعنى اعتماداً على السياقات والحالات المختلفة. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، يستكشف المقال التفاعل الثقافي ويتناول التحديات والقيود والمزايا، فضلاً عن السياق الاجتماعي وإعدادات البحث ضمن الإطار اللغوي والثقافي العام

الكلمات المفتاحية: الثقافة؛ التنوع الثقافي؛

الدراسات الثقافية؛ اللغة؛ التعدد الثقافي

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1. INTRODUCTION

The exploration of theories, trends, and opinions surrounding the concepts of culture and interculturality necessitates an inherently interdisciplinary approach. Indeed, beneath the encompassing term "intercultural" lies a multitude of diverse cultures, disciplines, and ideas. Similarly, the task of selecting among different theories, trends, and providing commentary on them poses a challenge greater than the research itself. Therefore, this article does not claim to present a comprehensive study on culture and interculturality. Instead, our objective is to provide a panoramic overview of select theories and concepts developed within the field of interculturality, with a particular focus on culture, cultural diversity, and alterity. We draw upon theories from disciplines such as anthropology, sociology, social psychology, and education.

The central aim of this article is to examine the interaction between culture, diversity, and the fundamental right to cultural flourishing within a culturally diverse society. In doing so, we seek to inquire into the stakes involved in fostering a society that values and supports culture, diversity, and the ability to thrive culturally.

It is important to note that this article does not attempt to exhaustively cover every aspect of interculturality, as the subject is vast and multifaceted. Instead, we aim to shed light on key theories and concepts that contribute to our understanding of intercultural dynamics and the implications they hold for individuals and societies.

2. Culture and Cultural Diversity

2.1 Culture

The word "culture" has its roots in the Latin term "cultura" or "cultus," derived from the verb "colere," which signifies cultivation. In a broad sense, culture can be classified into two main categories: Culture with a capital 'C,' which encompasses literature and the arts, and culture with a lowercase 'c,' which pertains to attitudes, values, beliefs, and everyday lifestyles (Richard and Schmidt, 2002:138).

Human beings exist in multiple dimensions. They inhabit physical space and the natural environment. They exist in time, which gives them a historical past that accumulates experiences and shapes their future aspirations. This interaction between individuals and their surroundings influences them in various ways. They engage in activities within the communities to which they belong, establishing a sense of identity with fellow group members, collaborating to maintain continuity and peace. What sets humans apart, as social beings, is culture. Culture unifies and encompasses all the complexities that affect individuals, including their environmental context, the history of their group, and their social connections. Culture mobilizes these elements and equips individuals with the ability to adapt to the intricacies of their surroundings.

Culture, though often narrowly perceived, is a body of knowledge popularized by institutions and valued by specific groups. It encompasses a broad psycho-anthropological conception. According to Claude Canet, it is an "ensemble of meaning systems specific to a group, predominant meanings that appear as values and give rise to rules and norms that the group preserves and strives to transmit, thereby distinguishing

itself from neighboring groups. It is a set of meanings that every individual assimilates and recreates throughout their life. The actualizations of these interrelationships between individuals and the meanings held by the community constitute the dynamic aspect of culture."

Culture is not only what is practiced and produced by human beings but, above all, what is consciously and unconsciously manifested within a particular community. Culture can be understood as the collective body of imaginary and symbolic forms that shape an individual's relationship with oneself, others, the environment, and the broader community. Thus, an individual who internalizes and identifies with these forms adopts a cultural identity. According to Laplantine (1987), culture can be defined as the collection of behaviors, knowledge, and practical skills that are specific to a particular human group or society. This cultural repertoire is acquired through processes of learning and is subsequently transmitted to all members of the group or society.

The concept of culture aligns with Ward Goodenough's words: "Everything one needs to know to be a member... the culture of a given society consists of everything one needs to know or believe in order to behave in an acceptable manner to the members of that society, in any role they would accept for each other." Tylor, an anthropologist from Oxford who published in 1871 on primitive cultures, defines culture as "the complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society." (Tylor, 1871, as cited in Herskovits & Vaudou, 1967, p. 9). According to Hall, culture, when viewed through the lens of communication, comprises the collective practices of a society that emerge from numerous communication processes. He suggests that many challenges people face are connected to distorted communication. Culture is not only imposed on individuals but is also an inherent part of human existence in a broad sense. It serves as the connection between people and the methods they employ to interact with one another (Hall, 1959).

Emile Benveniste defines culture as "the human environment that, beyond the fulfillment of biological functions, gives form, meaning, and content to life and human activity. Culture is a fully symbolic phenomenon; it is defined as a highly complex set of representations organized by a code of relationships and values: traditions, religion, laws, politics, ethics, arts, and more." Everything that surrounds a person from birth leaves a deep imprint on their consciousness and guides their behavior in all aspects of their activities.

2.2 Culture and Manifest Inconsistencies

Culture is not an external force to be considered apart from the processes and individuals that form it. Instead, it should be viewed as a structured system of meanings within these very systems. There are various definitions of culture, but one of the most well-known, proposed by E.B. Tylor (1967), describes culture as a comprehensive entity that encompasses knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, laws, customs, and acquired habits and tendencies. However, to understand culture fully, we must address a series of apparent contradictions, as discussed by Herskovits and Vaudou (1967, p.10):

- While culture is universal as a human value, its realizations in each community are unique.

- Culture is consistent, yet it also evolves and undergoes continuous changes.
- It influences and shapes our lives significantly, but it rarely dominates our scholarly thinking.

These contradictions manifest themselves in various ways. The universality of culture stems from the universality of humans as creators of culture. It is a characteristic shared by all human beings, regardless of their spatial or cultural context. Although cultures differ in their specific expressions, they all possess a limited number of aspects that can be isolated for analysis. By examining different angles, we can demonstrate how the concept of the universality of culture extends to include all branches of human heritage.

In practical terms, all human groups use technologies to extract resources from their environment, meet their needs, and engage in daily activities. They have economic systems that optimize resource utilization, and they operate within organized social structures and hierarchies. No society exists in complete anarchy. Additionally, every society possesses a worldview, an understanding of the universe's origin and functioning, and theories on interacting with the supernatural to achieve certain goals. In summary, culture encompasses all aspects of human production, including aesthetic and linguistic products, as well as ideals. It is not exclusive to any particular group or society but is a characteristic of humans, expressed differently in each community.

Understanding a culture requires considering its past. Each culture is shaped by the particular experiences of its people, and their traditions embody their history. To comprehend a culture, it is essential to employ all available methods such as historical sources, comparative studies of ways of life, and archaeological material to uncover its roots and development (Herskovits & Vaudou, 1967, p.11). Therefore, a synchronic and diachronic approach, utilizing archaeological, historical, comparative, and explanatory methods, is necessary to grasp culture fully. By embracing these two perspectives, we resolve the paradox of culture's universality and uniqueness, acknowledging both its commonality as a human principle and its diverse practices across cultures.

While cultures may appear stable due to the gradual pace of change they undergo, they are inherently dynamic. Cultures that resist change stagnate and become obsolete. Changes occur over time, often so subtly that they become noticeable only when contrasting the present with the past. For example, examining an old photograph reveals shifts in fashion. Furthermore, this tendency for change is not limited to a particular culture; it is a universal phenomenon. Even minute details, such as variations in ornament styles or new recipes for traditional foods, signify cultural evolution.

Cultures cross-pollinate through contact, enriching one another. However, these enrichments usually occur in details that do not alter the core existence of each culture. Spatial distance and lack of contact hinder remarkable changes in a culture, as observed among tribes isolated in the Amazon and in other communities, regardless of their number, distance, or customs' simplicity. Determining objective criteria for stability and change is challenging, as viewpoints on the desirability or acceptability of change vary, highlighting the relativity of opinions. Contemporary thought generally views adaptations in the material aspects of civilization as commendable, while changes in intangible elements, such as moral codes, family structures, or political authorities, often face

criticism or resistance. This distinguishes our culture, emphasizing its aptitude for technological transformation while minimizing stability in other areas.

Culture permeates our lives unconsciously, extending beyond alternative viewpoints. This aspect presents psychological and philosophical challenges. Should we establish a field of study, a discipline, or even a science solely focused on culture to address the myriad issues it entails? White (1963) proposes "culturology" as a potential scientific discipline exploring culture as a separate entity from humans. However, there are equally compelling reasons to consider culture as a psychological reality existing within the structures of an individual's mentality.

In philosophy, the debate between realism and idealism arises when contemplating the nature of culture. This conflict highlights a fundamental division in how we conceive human nature and the world. David Bidney (1968) argues that pushing either position to the exclusion of the other leads to an error that cannot be resolved without a complex understanding that encompasses both perspectives. Facts and natural forces alone cannot explain the birth and evolution of cultural life. Both realism and idealism contain essential measures necessary for understanding culture. Therefore, considering the arguments presented by both sides is crucial in answering the question of the nature of culture.

Culture extends beyond the realms of arts and letters. From sociological and anthropological perspectives, culture encompasses the entire product of human interaction with the environment and fellow human beings. Specific traits, norms, customs, and usages define each culture, shaped by its conditions of production and progression. Culture serves two functions: an ontological function that enables humans to identify themselves and others, and an instrumental function that facilitates adaptation to new environments through the appropriation of behaviors and attitudes (Herskovits & Vaudou, 1967, p.11).

2.3 Culture and Society

In traditional societies, the emphasis is placed on the ontological function of culture, where cultural adaptations are relatively rare and slow. Identity and cultural definitions are closely intertwined due to the anthropological characteristics of tradition, such as collective memory, the absence of rupture between past and present, conformity, and a temporal dimension that connects these two notions. However, in modern societies, the instrumental or pragmatic function of culture has significantly expanded to meet the demands of a rapidly changing and complex environment. According to Berger and Luckmann (2016), culture is not a fixed or static entity but emerges and evolves through social processes and interactions. Thus, culture is not only a system with structural functions but also serves pragmatic and semiotic purposes.

Individuals are not passive recipients of culture; rather, they actively adapt and utilize it to meet their needs and navigate the complexities of a diverse environment influenced by various factors. An intercultural approach is crucial for understanding cultural diversity, focusing on variations rather than disparities, interactions rather than conflicts, ongoing processes rather than static conditions, and cultural manifestations rather than rigid

structures. This perspective embraces the complexity of cultural dynamics and can be seen as a "generative science" (Balandier, 1989; Bardhan, 1989).

Cultural diversity and pluralism are defining features of contemporary societies. (Balandier, 1989; Abdallah-Pretceille, 2004). The concept of culture as an order, structure, or system no longer provides a comprehensive understanding, as it tends to highlight differences and categorizations (Balandier, 1989). Since the 1980s, culture has been viewed as the product and realization of exchange situations, within a context where plurality and heterogeneity exist not only at the group level but also within each individual, irrespective of their ethnic, social, or national affiliations. Globalization tends to reinforce heterogeneity rather than homogeneity in the world, as familiarity and acceptance of the "foreign" gradually increase. This allows individuals to construct their cultures in increasingly differentiated and complex ways. Culture exists within a space of relationships, and plurality cannot be neatly divided into homogeneous units. Each individual represents themselves and contributes to the cultural mosaic in unique and irreplaceable ways. Culture is the mix that remains the source of cultural processes, making it inherently baroque (Abdallah-Pretceille, 2004).

The notion of cultural baroque encourages moving away from fixed and rigid notions of cultural identity, emphasizing the juxtaposition of diverse elements without imposing systematic and rigid ordering. It reflects the ambivalence surrounding the concept of culture and embraces the complexity and heterogeneity of cultural phenomena (Abdallah-Pretceille, 2004). Cultural baroque invites individuals to transcend the confines of identity narratives and explore the interplay and fusion of various cultural elements in a dynamic and evolving manner. It highlights the idea that culture is a fluid and multifaceted space of relations where each individual contributes to its construction in unique and irreplaceable ways.

2.4. Cultural Diversity

The coexistence of diverse cultures within a single society introduces a sense of diversity into human existence (Kymlicka, 1995). Terms such as "cultural pluralism," "cultural diversity," and "multiculturalism" are commonly used to describe societies that encompass a multitude of cultures, religions, languages, and races (Kymlicka, 1995). However, the presence of cultural diversity and social pluralism holds significant importance as it compels individuals to critically assess the merits and drawbacks of their own cultures and lifestyles. This perspective distinguishes Parekh's view from that of liberals and communitarians, who may acknowledge the significance of cultures in giving meaning to choices or recognize that diverse cultures enhance autonomy by offering additional options in ways of life for the broader society (Kymlicka, 1995).

Understanding cultural differences can help model a culture, which is the initial step in a process aimed at comprehending cultural variations and the processes or dynamics that allow for deciphering complex situations or contexts (Bardhan, 1989). The coexistence of diverse cultures within a single society contributes to the richness of human existence (Balandier, 1989). Cultural pluralism goes beyond a simple parallel juxtaposition of separate cultures. It recognizes that cultures are not homogenous entities but rather variations that are dynamic and evolving in certain aspects, blending together to create a

mosaic where each piece has an important and irreplaceable role. Culture is a mixture that remains a source of cultural processes (Balandier, 1989). Thus, cultural diversity and the experience of alterity can be seen as sources of enrichment and catalysts for promoting flexible thinking (Bardhan, 1989).

In most modern societies, strangeness and encounters with the "other" have become familiar and commonplace. Distances have been shortened, and temporality has faded into immediate information conveyed by new media, including the internet. Consequently, no group or individual can escape cultural diversity (Iverson, 2011).. Identity formation is multifaceted, encompassing regional, national, territorial, religious, professional, generational, and other identities. Individual and collective choices and behaviors are influenced by this diversity, leading to identity games, strategies, and manipulations. Simultaneous adherence to multiple groups with potentially incompatible or opposing norms challenges any attempt to classify or identify individuals who are simultaneously polychrome, unique, autonomous, and independent in relation to others. Encounters and exchanges, starting with communication, enable individuals to move beyond the cultural representations we have of them, fostering a deeper understanding of cultural diversity and its significance in contemporary society (Iverson, 2011).

3. Language and Culture

3.1 The Relationship between Language and Culture

The relationship between language and culture has been a subject of exploration influenced by the fields of linguistics and anthropology. Scholars have emphasized the interconnection between language and culture, recognizing that they are inseparable and mutually influential (Brown, 1994). According to Brown, language is an integral part of a culture, just as culture is an essential component of language (p. 165).

José Mailhot (1969) delves into the relationship between language and culture, drawing on the perspectives of Boas and Whorf. Boas highlighted the influence of culture on the form of language, while Whorf emphasized how language shapes our experiences. Mailhot points out that the issue lies in understanding the causality between language and culture, as both are simultaneous phenomena that mutually influence each other. Rather than seeking unilateral influence, research focuses on identifying correlations between the two. This challenge was raised by Claude Lévi-Strauss during a conference that brought together linguists and anthropologists in Bloomington (Indiana) in 1958, suggesting that certain correlations may be detectable between specific aspects and levels (Mailhot, 1969).

One significant finding from these studies is the correlation between the lexical content of a language and the cultural interests of a society. As Sapir noted, language encompasses the ideas, interests, and occupations that are central to a community. It is evident that language reflects the culture in which it is spoken. For example, Arctic populations may lack words for tropical plants but have multiple terms for snow or

animals that are crucial for their sustenance. This relationship between lexical content and cultural content demonstrates that language is intricately tied to its cultural context (Sapir, 1921). Moreover, it is recognized that the semantic level of language provides valuable insights into culture, as the meanings and referents involved extend beyond linguistic facts (Mailhot, 1969).

4. Culture Between Societal and Official Status

4.1 Valued Culture/Popular Cultures

Culture, from a sociological perspective, encompasses the shared beliefs, values, norms, symbols, behaviors, and practices that characterize a particular group or society (Giddens, 2013). It is a social construct that is learned and transmitted through socialization, providing individuals with a framework for understanding and navigating their world (Berger & Luckmann, 1966).

Culture is not static but dynamic, evolving through social processes and interactions (Swidler, 1986). It is influenced by social factors such as historical context, social structure, and power relations. Culture can be seen as a toolkit that people use in different configurations to solve various problems (Swidler, 1986).

Within culture, we can distinguish between popular culture and legitimized culture. Popular culture refers to the culture of the people, accessible to all segments of the population, and non-institutionalized (Bourdieu, 1984). In contrast, legitimized culture represents the knowledge and practices that are considered legitimate and valued within a society. It is associated with higher social classes and encompasses activities such as classical music, fine arts, literature, and theater (Bourdieu, 1984; Swidler, 1986).

Bernard Lahire, influenced by Bourdieu's work, highlights the role of individuals in constructing their own cultural practices (Lahire, 2004). Lahire argues that each individual, regardless of social class, may engage in different cultural practices. He introduces the concept of "cultural omnivore," which combines legitimized and popular cultural practices (Peterson, 1992). Lahire refers to the "dissonance" between individuals and different cultural practices, highlighting the variation and diversity of cultural preferences within and across social classes.

The formation of cultural practices is influenced by socialization spaces such as family, school, and friends, shaping individuals' actions and choices (Lahire, 2004). Cultural practices are not homogeneous but vary depending on the environments in which individuals engage in their cultural preferences.

In summary, culture exists in the interplay between valued culture and popular cultures. Valued culture represents the sanctioned and legitimized cultural activities associated with higher social classes, while popular culture encompasses the culture of the people and aims to be accessible to all. The distinction between these forms of culture is not rigid, and individuals engage in diverse cultural practices that may transcend social class boundaries, creating a rich and varied cultural landscape within society.

5. CONCLUSION

This reflection aimed to provide insights into various intercultural concepts and their

interconnectedness, including culture, cultural diversity, and the dynamics that occur when different cultural universes intersect. The interdisciplinary nature of intercultural studies necessitates synthesizing theories from various disciplines and perspectives, offering an eclectic approach to understanding these concepts. It is important to acknowledge that this exploration is not exhaustive but rather serves as an overview of some theories and concepts related to culture and interculturality.

Within this context, interculturality is understood at both the individual and community levels, highlighting the continuous and ongoing process toward an "intercultural" society. However, it is crucial to recognize that the definition of interculturality remains incomplete and can take on different meanings in different contexts and situations. In our exploration, we have examined interculturality, its challenges, constraints, and advantages, as well as the presence of ethnocentrism, prejudices, and stereotypes. By selectively exploring this research domain, we emphasize the importance of acknowledging and embracing diversity as a fundamental aspect of cultural fulfillment and development.

Consistency requires us to recognize that the right to cultural development includes the freedom to choose the culture in which individuals wish to participate, much like the right to education encompasses the freedom to choose between different educational institutions and networks. However, this freedom of choice is not unlimited, and the state is not obligated to support or endorse entirely marginal cultural institutions or communities that could undermine social stability and cohesion.

In summary, understanding interculturality and its implications involves recognizing the complexity of cultural dynamics and the need to value and respect cultural diversity. It requires a continuous effort to challenge ethnocentrism, prejudices, and stereotypes while fostering an environment that promotes intercultural dialogue and understanding. By embracing diversity and allowing individuals the freedom to choose their cultural paths, we can work towards a more inclusive and harmonious society.

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