

THE SHAPING OF A MONOCULTURAL MINDSET THROUGH AN INTERNATIONALISED CURRICULUM. AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY

LA FORMACIÓN DE UNA MENTALIDAD MONOCULTURAL A TRAVÉS DE UN CURRÍCULO INTERNACIONALIZADO. UN ESTUDIO ETNOGRÁFICO

Pérez-Mendoza, Marcos; Cuevas-Álvarez, María Cruz; Arias-Moguel, Gerardo Ulises

Marcos Pérez-Mendoza marcos.perez@ujat.mx
Universidad Juárez Autónoma de Tabasco, México
María Cruz Cuevas-Álvarez maria.cuevas@ujat.mx
Universidad Juárez Autónoma de Tabasco, México
Gerardo Ulises Arias-Moguel
ariasmoguel@outlook.com
Universidad Juárez Autónoma de Tabasco, México

Revista de Investigaciones Universidad del Quindío
Universidad del Quindío, Colombia
ISSN: 1794-631X
ISSN-e: 2500-5782
Periodicity: Anual
vol. 34, no. 2, 2022
riuq@uniquindio.edu.co

Received: 21 April 2022
Accepted: 01 August 2022

URL: <http://portal.amelica.org/ameli/journal/517/5173391009/>

Resumen: El siguiente estudio etnográfico se llevó a cabo en una IES pública ubicada en el sureste de México. El objetivo del estudio fue verificar el supuesto de que los estudiantes matriculados en un curso de segundo idioma pueden cambiar su mentalidad monocultural a una mentalidad intercultural. Para este estudio etnográfico se observaron con un nivel de observación moderado cuatro grupos de 35 estudiantes cada uno, pertenecientes a cuatro áreas de conocimiento diferentes: administración, contabilidad, economía y marketing. Las categorías obtenidas fueron resolución de problemas, código de vestimenta, espacio personal, acento y coloquialismo. Los resultados revelan que los estudiantes de Marketing son más propensos que sus compañeros a realizar un cambio de mentalidad debido a aspectos específicos de su carrera: si quieren vender productos o servicios en otra cultura, tienen que pensar en la cultura anfitriona para poder obtener productos o servicios. servicios a aceptar. El currículo internacionalizado es una estrategia sugerida para convertirse en una universidad anfitriona.

Palabras clave: Internacionalización, estudiantes internacionales, estudiantes domésticos, currículo internacionalizado, mentalidad monocultural.

Abstract: The following ethnographic study was carried out in a public HEI located in southeast Mexico. The aim of the study was to verify the assumption that students enrolled in a second language course can change their monocultural mindset into an intercultural one. For this ethnographic study, four groups of 35 students each, belonging to four different knowledge areas: administration, accounting, economics, and marketing, were observed with a moderated level of observation. The categories obtained were problem-solving, dress code, personal space, accent, and colloquialism. The findings reveal that Marketing students are more prone than their peers to make a mindset change due to specific aspects of their career: if they want to sell products

or services in another culture, they have to think of the host culture in order for products or services to be accepted. The internationalized curriculum is a suggested strategy in order to become a host university.

Keywords: Internationalisation, international students, domestic students, internationalized curriculum, monocultural mindset.

Introduction

Mobility has been long understood as a synonym for Internationalisation, despite specifications and definitions given by experts on the subject over the years. But even though having international students has been the only strategy considered so far, there have been gaps not filled, specially when it comes to preparing the conditions or scenarios for receiving international students who eventually will have to interact with domestic ones.

The monocultural mindset must occur in a two-way street, from policy makers to administrators because having students from different parts of the globe can create cultural differences and will possibly not permit to create a space for two cultures to colive or collaborate. Therefore, the issue to consider besides language is education. The way a person is formed in a degree can also affect the acceptance of people from other cultures. That is why, the proposal that grammar of a particular spoken language affects the way people think or perceive reality by Sapir-Whorf was selected for this research.

This qualitative study was conducted with Mexican students from a Public Higher Education Institution located in the southeast Mexico. Through an ethnographic study and the participant observation technique. Students from the Economic Administrative knowledge areas were observed during second language courses for a school term. Firstly, the intention was to determine whether a monocultural mindset could be changed and secondly what aspects could the person change and be observable over time. Finally, the study uncovers what students according to their education are more prone to change their mindset into an intercultural one and the reason to do so.

Reference Framework

Through the years, student mobility has become a relevant topic for Higher Education Institutions [HEI] and the preferred strategy of Internationalisation. English-speaking destinations are still the preferred choice for international students, since 2002 to 2009, Australia, Canada, United States, and the United Kingdom have been the reference choice for mobility by international students.

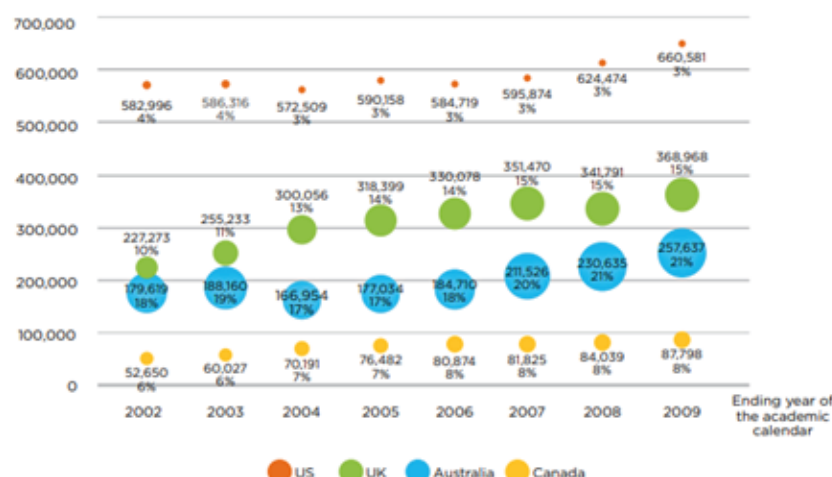


Figure 1. Number and percentage of International Students in Total Enrollment by hosting countries de Choudaha & Chang (2012)

In this list other emerging countries should be included: China, India, Saudi Arabia, Vietnam, Mexico and Brazil. This latter climbed to the top 10 countries for exporting students while Saudi Arabia became the fourth largest source country of active students with an increase of 50% compared to the one obtained in 2010. Globalization has permitted and led to interaction with individuals around the world, situation that will continue to increase according to Yook & Turner (2018).

COUNTRY	2010	2011	CHANGE OF 2011/2010
All	799,581	858,180	7.33%
China	153,312	196,857	28.40%
South Korea	105,696	104,908	-0.75%
India	103,760	99,316	-4.28%
Canada	30,803	30,779	-0.08%
Saudi Arabia	29,391	43,910	49.40%
Japan	28,805	27,188	-5.61%
Taiwan	27,046	25,918	-4.17%
Vietnam	17,116	18,044	5.42%
Mexico	15,660	16,777	7.13%
Nepal	13,353	*	NA
Brazil	*	14,378	NA

Figure 2. Change in Total Active Students by Country of Origin, 2010 and 2011 de Choudaha & Chang (2012).

With the rise of English-taught Programmes in Europe, Asia and Middle East is expanding student choice. Another relevant information is the revenue the US received from 5.1 million of international students. Only in 2016 it had a 300 billion estimated economic impact from direct, indirect and induced mobility (Choudaha, 2019).

In 2018, the 876,399 enrolments in Australia were produced by 693, 750 international students alone. The education sector now represents its greatest export at a value of \$33.9 billion (Studies in Australia, 2020). As numbers indicate in these two examples, international students contribute to billions of dollars income. For de Wit (2020) mobility has been reduced to an industry for more than 30 years, a source of revenue and a means for enhanced reputation.

While Internationalisation of Higher Education is not just about global mobility, this remains its most visible and dominant form. More than two decades later, Internationalisation of Higher Education is again threatened by nationalism and other factors (Choudaha & de Wit, 2019).

Reason why most Higher Education Institutions are making the necessary efforts for mobility leaving aside the fact that in order to receive international students, it is imperative to make students, faculty and staff aware of the importance of a non-monocultural mindset and is preparing them to change it into an intercultural one. Not only for the income they represent, but also and more importantly, for what people can learn from being in contact with other cultures.

In the beginning of the Internationalisation Process in Mexico, it was seen as another way of colonization and supremacy. Internationalisation should not be considered as “westernized, largely Anglo-Saxon, and predominantly English-speaking paradigm” (Jones & de Wit, 2014:28) but as a means of global understanding and coming together. As years passed by and benefits were observed, the concept was finally accepted. HEIs, who are in charge of offering and providing international education, have reported slight Internationalisation efforts due to certain issues. On one hand, mobility, as the selected strategy, has been put on hold as a result of budgeting problems in the country and in the HEIs. On the other hand, neither students nor faculty are prepared to receive international students leading to an imminent disappearance overtime. Other measures or strategies should be implemented when mobility is no longer an option. International students can be received, but in order to do so, other Internationalisation strategies must be implemented, such as the Internationalised Curriculum.

Student mobility is an existing activity due to international students. Individuals who live or reside for a period of time in another country because of an Exchange program or as an enrolled student (Lin & Yi, 1997; Clark, 2009; Government of Canada, 2020; The Forum on Education Board, 2020; University World News, 2020). Considering the numbers and revenue international students leave in host countries, Mexican HEIs must be focusing their efforts in creating the necessary conditions for hosting international students and thus provide an international environment for their domestic ones. In order to create this type of environment, domestic students must learn that differences or cultural shock may occur when interacting with international students. Their monocultural mindset is to be trained to change into an intercultural one, in order for both cultures to colive and collaborate on a daily basis.

Moreover, there is a positive relation between intercultural experience and motivation for academic mobility as presented by Diler (2016), whose results show that having foreign friends and attending intercultural events could be considered as positive predictors for considering student exchange programmes that might translate into future student mobility.

In the results obtained by Brunsting, Smith & Zachry (2018), they mention in their comparative study, that participants were enrolled in an academic and cultural transition course and results reported increases in knowledge, confidence and usefulness of intercultural competence, three core intercultural

skills (suspending judgement, shifting perspectives and self-advocacy) from the Deardoff model.

In the findings of the case presented by Tang & Witt (2018), the authors mention in their qualitative study that Chinese participants possessed desires to interact with Americans because they generally encountered cultural difficulties when socializing with students outside their co-national circle. Another relevant finding is that Chinese students who had more time in the host country, tried to interact with non-Chinese peers, because as they were from the same country, they thought and acted alike, otherwise what is the point of being in an international Exchange program, they might as well stay in their home country. The idea of studying in another country is to have an international experience and learn from it.

For instance, the University College Dublin in Ireland is holding a seminar about the development of Intercultural Competence by an expert in Inclusive Internationalisation (Mangan, 2020). Understanding what is needed when interacting with foreigners, in this seminar core categories such as: attitudes, knowledge & critical understanding, skills, and values are covered in order to prepare for this type of interaction.

Literature Review

Studies conducted by Bennet, Byram, Deardoff, and Hofstede & Milosevic indicate that in order to change from a monocultural mindset into an intercultural one, the person should be in contact with another culture. Bennet (1996) considered it a linear process through six stages: a) denial, people deny there are differences; b) defense, defense against difference, negative stereotyping, assumption of cultural superiority; c) minimization acceptance, emphasis on importance of similarities; d) adaptation, emphatic shift during interaction or biculturality, and e) integration, integration of difference, application of ethnorelativism to one's own identity.

Byram, Nichols, Stevens (2001) in his Model of Intercultural Communication Competence indicates that it is an ability of five dimensions: a) knowledge, how social groups and identities function; b) skills, interpreting and relating which involve mediation; c) critical cultural awareness, evaluate critically on basis of explicit criteria in one's own culture or other cultures; d) attitudes, of the intercultural speaker; e) skills of discovery and interaction, acquire new knowledge of a culture/cultural practices and to operate in real time communication and interaction.

For Deardoff's Intercultural Competence (2006), it is a cyclic process beginning from attitudes, moving towards knowledge & comprehension, making a pause in internal outcome and ending with an external outcome. She defines them as follows: 1) attitudes: a) respect, valuing other cultures, b) openness, withholding judgement; c) curiosity & Discovery, tolerating ambiguity; 2) knowledge & comprehension/skills: cultural self-awareness, deep cultural knowledge, sociolinguistic awareness and skills: to listen, to observe & evaluate, to analyze, interpret & relate; 3) internal outcome: informed frame of reference shift (adaptability, flexibility, ethnorelative view and empathy; 4)

external outcome: effective and appropriate communication & behavior in an intercultural situation.

Hofstede's & Milosevic's Cultural dimensions (2011), they indicate that there are six dimensions that oppose or differentiate cultures from one another: a) power distance, the extent to which the less powerful members of organizations and institutions accept and expect that power is distributed unequally; b) uncertainty avoidance, is deals with a society's tolerance for ambiguity; c) individualism vs. collectivism, the degree to which people in a society are integrated into groups; d) masculinity vs. femininity, refers to the distribution of values between genders which is another fundamental issue for any society; e) long-term vs. short-term orientation, considers the extent to which society views its time horizon, and e) indulgence vs. restraint, considers the extent and tendency for a society to fulfill its desires, around how societies control their impulses and desires.

Theoretical Framework

In contrast to the theories reviewed, in the Sapir-Whorf work, it is suggested that people who learn a second language have the tendency of changing their mindset or the way they perceive reality and the way they think and act. For the purpose of this study, this theory was selected for being the most appropriate to the objective of study.

Sapir-Whorf theory

In their work Linguistic Relativism, they argued that language categories and usage influence not only the way the speaker thinks but also the way he or she behaves (Sapir-Whorf, 19129, 1985, 1956). Cited in Goncharov (2014):

"The fact of the matter is that the 'real world' is to a large extent unconsciously built up on the language habits of the group. No two languages are ever sufficiently similar enough to be considered as representing the same social reality. The worlds in which different societies live are distinct worlds, not merely the same world with different labels attached."

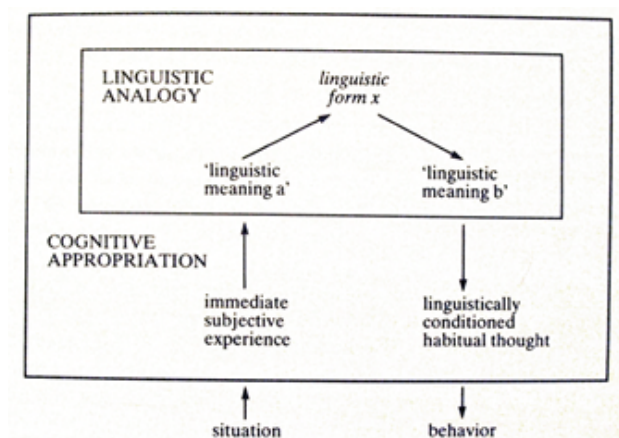


Figure 3. The Linguistic relativity hypothesis in Language, Diversity and Thought de Lucy (1992).

Whorf echoed, "Users of markedly different grammars are pointed by their grammars toward different types of observations and different evaluations of externally similar acts of observation.

What can be understood from their work is that a) language coerces thought, b) the limit of one's language is the limit of one's world, c) people's thoughts are determined by the categories made available by their language and d) people are at the mercy of the particular language they speak.

The Behavior-centered approach begins with an encounter and a marked difference in behavior, usually one that is initially inexplicable but which the researcher comes to believe has its roots in a pattern of thought arising from language practices (Whorf, 1956b).

Rationale

Firstly, one of the reasons for carrying out this study is because Internationalisation strategies and focus are a choice of HEIs and should less be aligned to national governments strategies as agendas tend to change, and should be more focused in the three core HEIs functions: education, research and service to society (Knight (2008), and secondly, because there should be more qualitative studies as more research focused on Internationalisation at Home than abroad (De Wit, 2020), because research on influences is essential both empirically and theoretically for developing a comprehensive view of the relation between language and thought (Lucy, 1997).

Research Method

This article is the result of a qualitative exploratory approach through the ethnographic method and participant observation technique with a moderated level of observation. Using an observation checklist that was elaborated from a first approach to an intentional group of students who were previously enrolled in school subjects taught in a second language and who provided valuable information that helped determine the following categories and described as follows by the researchers:

Table 1. Analysis of Categories and definitions

Category	Definition
Problem solving	The ability to best give solutions to problems or situations from different angles both in academia or work.
Dress code	The ability to understand that the proper attire will be determined by the host culture and in order to be accepted, adjustments must be made.
Personal space	The ability to understand and assimilate there is an invisible bubble or distance among people that varies from culture to culture.
Accent	The ability to recognize and accept that every culture has a different and specific accent.
Colloquialism	The ability of noticing that all the expressions or sayings are not the same in every culture and vary from one to the other.

Own elaboration

Universe and informants

Validity and credibility

The observation checklist was validated by a group of experts formed by five faculty members who speak a second language, have had international experiences and have interacted with foreigners for academic and research reasons. Two of them have a PhD in Economic Sciences, one is a PhD in Regional Studies, and the two other experts hold a PhD in Business Administration and are of the faculty of the same university. Information was analyzed with the Atlas.ti software for coding and indicated as follows: Ac for accounting, Ad for administration, Mkt for marketing and Ec for Economics.

Table 2. Marketing students

PDF generated from XML JATS4R

Accounting, Administration, and Economics students

In the case of students belonging to the other knowledge areas: administration, accounting and economics, they did not show evident changes because they considered, as manifested orally during the observation period, that they would not be in touch with people from other cultures or would never have the need as they will work in an office with numbers or information and will not be in contact with other people.

Other relevant findings

A misconception from the Mexican way of thinking is that administration, accounting and economics students will never be in contact with people from other cultures. Opposed to what their counterparts expressed.

Mkt “We are in a globalized and interconnected world, and in any moment, they might find themselves working or collaborating with people from other cultures and adaptations or adjustments will be more difficult to come by if not trained”.

Another relevant finding is that neither gender nor age is of no issue when referring to the mindset change.

Mkt “People from all ages and all genders need to develop the ability to make a change in the way they think, specially when getting into contact with foreign people. It doesn’t matter if you are a man, woman, child or adult because you never know when you will need it”.

This ability is imperative no matter the knowledge areas specifically for future employment around the globe.

Mkt “Nowadays, a second language is necessary for any job, either in Mexico or in another country. And as hiring conditions get worse in our country, we need to consider the idea of looking for jobs overseas. In countries where they are tolerant and respectful of diversity and they don’t discriminate because of the color of the skin”.

Further Research

It is relevant to consider these results might turn out different depending on the geographical location in the country due to closeness to foreign people, for instance both in the northern and southern borders of the country. Also, for special consideration, universities with presence of international students or high percentages of mobility.

Another special consideration would be to carry out observations with students from other knowledge areas, such as: biology, medicine, engineering among others, in order to analyse what results would be obtained from their perspective.

Conclusions

Foreign students have more possibilities than domestic ones to live and experience an international environment due to budget-supporting exchange programs. Eventhough, international students can choose a host university from a variety of options, the receiving university holds the responsibility to prepare both students and faculty for this purpose.

In the case of Mexican students if prepared, they would have the same opportunities, as international ones do, so they can experience an international environment, work with peers from other nationalities, learn how to solve problems from different perspectives, but most importantly to learn how to shift their mindset in order to adapt to a new culture without being acculturized.

Eventhough, the participants in this study had the opportunity to experience a second-language experience through a school term, their Mexican mindset limits them to think they will never be in contact neither interact with other cultures, except marketing students. These students are fully aware that they live in a globalized world, so they and their peers should be trained to interact with other cultures.

They understand that speaking a second language allows them to comprehend the way people from that culture thinks and behaves. Therefore, they know they have to change their monocultural mindset into an intercultural one whenever they get into contact with another culture. Marketing students suggests their peers to broaden their perspective and consider that in this new reality eventhough they do not believe it, they might find themselves interacting or being in a direct contact with people who speak a second language in the same campus or future workplace and will have to adapt to the situation for both parties to colive or collaborate.

From these encouraging preliminary findings, it is concluded that the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis is a correct proposal because the grammar of the particular language a person speaks, affects the way people perceive reality. This proposal is to be considered when studying about international and domestic students focused on mindset change but also on the conditions provided for this semi-immersion in a second language.

HEIs should be focusing their efforts not only in mobility to foreign countries but in receiving international students if their budget ceiling is limited or inexistent. An internationalised Curriculum allows students to have the opportunities only international students have access to in the moment.

Monetarily speaking, becoming a host university is another way of having additional income for Mexican HEIs. Income they are not receiving and moreover having international students would also provide them worldwide visibility by making their path into main global rankings. This Internationalisation Strategy must be implemented all over campus, so everyone is trained and conditions are met in order to become a host international university.

References

- Bennet, M. J. (1996). Towards ethnorelativism: a developmental mode of intercultural sensitivity. In R. M. Paige (Ed.), *Education for the intercultural experience* (pp. 21-72). Intercultural Press.
- Brunsting, N., Smith, A. & Zachry, C. (2018). An academic and cultural transition course for international students: Efficacy and socioemotional outcomes. *Journal of International Students*, 8(4), 1497-1521.
- Byram, M., Nichols, A. & Stevens, D. (2001). *Developing intercultural competence in practice*. Multilingual Matters.
- Clark, N. (2009). What defines an international student? *World Education New + Reviews*. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/81004x/2010005/def/intlstudent-etudiantetranger-eng.htm>
- Choudaha, R. (2019). The global impact of international students. https://www.studyportals.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Beyond_300b_International_Students_Final-Aug15.pdf
- Choudaha, R. y De Wit, H. (2019). Finding a sustainable future for student mobility. *University World News*. <https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20190205110138464>
- Choudaha, R. y Chang, L. (2012). Trends in international student mobility. New York: World Education Services. Retrieved from www.wes.org/RAS
- Deardoff, D. (2006). Identification and assessing intercultural competence as a student outcome of Internationalisation. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 10(3), 241-265.
- De Wit, H. (2020). Internationalisation of Higher Education: the need for a more ethical and qualitative approach. *Journal of International Students*, 10(1), 2166-3750.
- Diler, A. (2016) Addressing Intercultural Experience and Academic Mobility in Higher Education. *Journal of Intercultural Communication Research*, 45(6), 487-502, DOI: 10.1080/17475759.2016.1236032
- Hofstede, G. & Milosevic, D. (2011). Dimensionilizing cultures: the Hofstede Model in context. *Online readings in psychology and culture*, 2(1), 1-16.
- Knight, J. (2008). *Higher education in turmoil: The changing world of Internationalisation*. Sense Publishers.
- Goncharov, A. (2014). The concept of linguistic relativity. *The Kazakh-American University Academic Journal*, 6(1). <http://www.kafu-academic-journal.info/journal/6/184/>
- Government of Canada. (February 14th, 2020). Definition of International Students. Statistics Canada: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/81-004-x/2010005/def/intlstudent-etudiantetranger-eng.htm>
- Jones E. & de Wit, H. (2014). Globalized Internationalisation: Implications for Policy and Practice. *IIENetworker*, 1(1), 28-29. https://www.academia.edu/6528914/Globalized_Internationalisation_Implications_for_Policy_and_Practice
- Lucy, J. A. (1992). *Studies in the social and cultural foundations of language*, No. 12. Language diversity and thought: A reformulation of the linguistic relativity hypothesis. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511620843>
- Lucy, J. A. (1997). Linguistic relativity. *Annual Reviews on Anthropology*, 26(1), 291-312.

- Lin, G., & Yi, J. K. (1997). Asian international students' adjustment: Issues and program suggestions. *College Student Journal*, 31(1), 473-479.
- Mangan, C. [@caroline_oconn] (February 21st, 2020). Seminar on Multiculturalism & the university. Twitter. https://twitter.com/caroline_oconn/status/1230875073109729281
- Studies in Australia. (2020). The facts and figures of international students in Australia.
- Tang, X., Collier, D. & Witt, A. (2018). Qualitative study on Chinese student's perception of U.S. University life. *Journal of International Students*, 8(1), 151-178.
- The Forum on Education Board. (February 14th, 2020). International student definition. <https://forumea.org/element/international-student/>
- University World News. (February, 14th, 2020). What defines an international student? <https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20090917182725104>
- Sapir, E. (1929). The status of linguistics as a science. *Language* 5. 207-14. Reprinted in *The selected writings of Edward Sapir in language, culture, and personality*, ed. by D. G. Mandelbaum, 160-6. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Sapir, E. (1985). *Culture, language and personality: Selected essays by Edward Sapir*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Whorf, B. L. (1956). *Language, Thought, and Reality: Selected Writings of Benjamin Lee Whorf*. MIT Press.
- Whorf, B. L. 1956b. (1939). The relation of habitual thought and behavior to language. See Carroll 1956, pp. 134-59.
- Yook, E. & Turner, P. (2018). Bringing international perspectives to the Communication Curriculum in the Age of Globalization. *Journal of Intercultural Communication Research*, 47(5), 375-381.