INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION AND EUROPEAN REPRESENTATIONS IN ROMANIAN SOCIETY[1]

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Abstract. *This study is about specific features of interpersonal communication from the point of view of the determining effects that they have on intercultural communication in Romania. This fact is seen as a social phenomenon with a determining role in forming and sustaining global societies. The general conclusion of the article refers to the possibility of monitoring and knowing the aspects related to the phenomenon of communication between people, in the context of European Union. This data is necessary in order to implement strategies connected to intercultural education in the social space of the Union. We use the database of Eurobarometer 89.1 (2018) from GESIS Data Catalogue, for making a database about Romanians perspectives and attitudes regard the European union society. We want to understand what European union means for Romanians and we conclude these meanings like arguments for integration. We want to show how is build the European identity in order of the possibilities of adapt intercultural education to Romanian society.*

Keywords: *intercultural communication, interpersonal communication, social behavior, intercultural education, attitudes and representations*

Such as many other aspects of social science, interpersonal communication is a subject close to the common perception, due to the notoriety of this human interaction phenomenon. Due to this fact, at first thought, interpersonal communication is understood sufficiently with the methods of common perception and are easily accessible, as long as not only people, but also animals transmit signals that are usually codified from the point of view of the intent of the messages that they represent. We must not forget that the level of common sense does not develop means that are analytical enough to cover the need for knowledge, and the perspectives that it conveys in almost all situations are lacunary, incomplete, sequential, as it does not succeed in covering the domain in its entirety, considering all the social, cultural, and historical contexts that are specific to it. Migration and integration of minorities in the European Union is related to the place of origin and receiving places of potential immigrants. Integration of minorities in the area of EU is considering as a solution for the concept of Europe without borders (Polgár, 2017). But integration is not possible without intercultural communication.

The phenomenon of interpersonal communication has always been a specific and defining characteristic of humanity, which is the basis for the most elementary associative forms, thus determining the evolution of criteria for the homogenization of groups (Kurtines, Gewirtz, 1991). Through interpersonal communication, people share their needs, faith,

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perceptions, experiences, which create a tendency to level all the visions related to the social perspective of human existence. This homogenization phenomenon, which will always have its limits that will ensure a permanent distance from absolute homogenization, is essential from the perspective of social evolution. Practically, it is at the foundation of common accomplishments, which exceed individual abilities, as well as at the basis of acceptance of the rules, social norms and institutions that are legitimized precisely through the idea of a collective accomplishment meant to ensure the change of social existence.

A type of interpersonal communication can be suggestive for the description of a basic social phenomenon, but, at the same time, it can be very complex due to the variety of its manifestations. Of course, the capturing of the means of interpersonal expression entails different points of view and multiple perspectives, in an attempt to capture the most eloquent features of this phenomenon. Considering the context in which it takes place, we discern two types of social communication:

a. Formal interpersonal communication, characterized by a set of communication and expression strategies meant to ensure the efficiency of a professional sector. As suggested by the presentation, this type of interpersonal communication is characteristic to public institutions, given that it is different from what takes places in a daily context. Formal interpersonal communication manifests in other fields of social life and it is characterized by the fact that it entails an official position, meant to establish a certain type of relations between participants, which are oriented towards the activity of the institution. Because of the needs tied to efficiency in communicating with clients, institutions have encouraged the development of specialized services for formal interpersonal communication. These are public relations departments.

b. Informal interpersonal communication manifests itself in daily life, in regular contexts of human existence. It is a type of communication that is unscheduled from an institutional or collective point of view. This type has a set of specific functions:

- It contributes essentially to the development of daily activities of individuals, being the basic element of interaction among them.
- Spontaneous interpersonal communication takes place in different forms, depending on the social context and the positions of the persons involved at a certain point. In time, along with ageing, people acquire a certain experience in communication, which is expressed by models of attitude or behaviour in one form or another, depending on which people they enter into contact.
- One can also speak about a function of knowledge, when people are permanently obligated to improve their abilities in order to undertake some activities efficiently.
- The need for socializing takes place through interpersonal communication, and this contributes to the preservation of a feeling of safety and the satisfaction of the need to belong to a social group.

From the point of view of the number of individuals participating in communication, we can also describe two types of interpersonal communication that imply specific psycho-social processes:

a. Dyadic interpersonal communication, which takes place between two people. It is a special form of communication, which entails a certain degree of intimacy between the two participants resulting in a form of participation that is often times more involved than in case of group interpersonal communication. The means of expression are free, lacking some of the reactions that are specific to social formalism. With this type of communication, participants have the opportunity to share problems tied to their deepest preoccupations and experiences, in the dyadic context that stimulates the manifestation of an empathic approach

from the participant. This encourages the strengthening of relations between the individuals and the preservation of a climate of mutual trust.

From another point of view, we can show that the dyadic form is the most appropriate means of adapting the transmitted message to the possibilities of understanding the participant. Usually in informal types of communication, the messages do not fall under a certain standard and, as a result, are not formulated under a specific form that follows the exact understanding of the message. The message formation takes place in concordance to the experience, the understanding and the possibilities of expression of the person transmitting the message. At the same time, the decoding of the messages takes place in accordance to the receiver's experience and the possibilities of understanding. In the context of dyadic interpersonal communication, the possibility to reconfigure the disparities between the transmitted and received message is much higher than in case of interpersonal communication with several participants.

b. Interpersonal communication with several participants has a series of characteristics that separate it from dyadic interpersonal communication. Compared to dyadic interpersonal communication, the abilities tied to acquired models of communication are used to a greater extent, as they represent standardized forms of expression and reaction, which are adapted to specific situations. These acquired models of communication are actually strategies of reaction to different communication contexts in which individuals participate. Continued preoccupation towards the effects that the attitudes and expressed position generate in a communication situation where more than two individuals participate is more pronounced than in the case of dyadic interpersonal communication. The possibility to amend a wrong or too personal point of view is higher in the context of multiple participation. On the one hand, singular points of view are fragile and, if uncovered by the legitimacy of approvals coming from the social entourage, they will be lost in their intensity of manifestation. On the other hand, the specifics of dyadic connection entail a bigger responsibility for the comfort of the participant, which increase the level of empathy towards his feelings, under a natural phenomenon. In the group context, this responsibility does not belong to one individual anymore, as it is decided by the majority reaction that describes the group reaction. For this reason, emotional reactions become more controlled and calculated, following certain spontaneous strategies, depending on group reactions. At the same time, the acceptance of a point of view is easier to accomplish in group interpersonal communication, considering the conditions in which it is identified as being approved by the majority of the group to which they report.

The context of many crisis in Europe is not only financial and economic, but also political, social, mental and even ideological. This is showing need to strengthen dialogue between ethnic groups, even if we are confronted with the trends of returning to certain forms of nationalism and cultural cleavage. Without advocating for one or the other of these trends, we can see that Europe is at a crossroads (Brie, 2011). Interpersonal communication is determinant in dialog between people which belong to the European ethnic groups. In the comprehensive analysis of interpersonal communication, we must take into account the objectives of the communication process, even if these objectives are not usually acknowledged by the participants in the communication. Actually, this is an aspect that makes the difference between interpersonal communication and other forms of communication. In case of mass communication or even public communication, the means of transmitting different messages, as well as their context, are persuasion strategies resulted from a mental construction process, which is based on a good knowledge of the psycho-social context of the target audience. As regards interpersonal communication, the

persuasion strategies for message justification and accuracy are more explicable based on intuitive, instinctual dimensions, which are adapted to the context on the spot. There are few situations when people analyse the ways to express different messages, a fact that ensures the spontaneity of interpersonal communication. Spontaneity itself is an argument for message attractiveness, stimulating the participant and maintaining its attention to the issues discussed. We must also state that spontaneity is not a sufficient attribute to communication processes, as it must be adapted to the approximative models of audiences and it must be accompanied by the general interest for issues discussed.
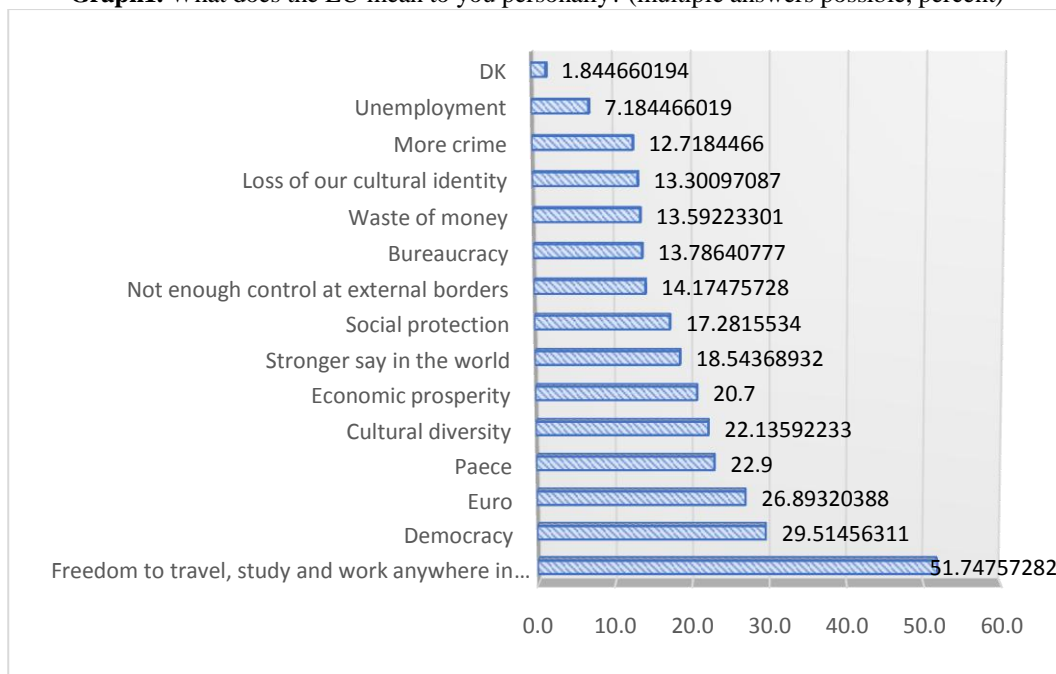
The objectives of interpersonal communication are various, but they can be found either as unique forms or as combined ones. Beyond the need to persuade the participant regarding the debate on which the communication is focused, the interest for self-knowledge or knowledge of the environment is present. All these objectives are manifested in the same communication act. The functional diversity of interpersonal communication conveys the complexity of this psycho-social phenomenon that can be analysed even from the perspective of its objectives that are interpreted through forms of manifestation, context and subjects. The persuasion of the participant is based on a general behavioural model, according to which people have the tendency of imposing their points of view, even in a subconscious manner. This phenomenon is based on the need to sustain an individual's functional position in the social context to which s/he belongs, which guarantees efficient integration in the group and the appreciation of peers. The phenomenon of persuasion also has a subjective connotation, which is defined as the tendency of individuals to consider their own points of view and interpretations as a personal, original characteristic, based on which the individual builds his/her own identity and develops the feeling of his/her uniqueness in relation to others. The models for the self-definition of identity take place in a comparative cognitive manner, oriented towards the overrating personal experiences and aptitudes, which the individual places instinctively at a superior level of existential meaning, from the perspective of relating to the experiences of aptitudes of others.

On the other hand, the need for self-knowledge is another important quality of humans, with important social valences. Based on the self-knowledge phenomenon, a series of self-evaluation processes takes place, based on which people build professional, familial, socialization strategies that offer them existential meanings and social identities. The need for self-knowledge manifests itself in the context of interpersonal communication by directing communication interactions so that the participant unveils his own conclusions regarding the expressed reactions and points of view. In some situations, people become more aware or they are forced to become aware of their subjectivity, especially when their own analyses are in disagreement with those of the members of the groups of peers. As a result, even the evaluation processes of the self implies the need to be confronted with other points of view, in order to be sure of their objectivity and fidelity. Alternatively, the process of interpersonal communication entails the phenomenon of decodifying the transmitted message, which is a characteristic of all forms of communication. The means of understanding certain messages can be different from the intent of the transmitters and, from this point of view, people need to verify the ways in which their own actions have been received, understood or interpreted. Social reality entails a powerful interpretative, symbolic dimension, which is defined through the perceptions on material dimensions and on relations with others. Due to different cultural dimensions and social contexts, but also due to individual experiences, the perceptions of the same phenomena are often very different and even contradictory. Interpersonal communication generates the possibility to find a

common denominator in order to interconnect the ways of interpreting the facts and phenomena that define social reality.

At the same time, our knowledge about the world is due to the contact with different sources, through which the direct exchange of information with members of different reference groups occupies an important place in the hierarchy of possible sources of information. Personal representations of reality are built through interpersonal communication contact whose role is to certify the importance of defining features of different facts and phenomena connected to the existence of individuals.

Graph1. What does the EU mean to you personally? (multiple answers possible, percent)

Category	Value
DK	1.844660194
Unemployment	7.184466019
More crime	12.7184466
Loss of our cultural identity	13.30097087
Waste of money	13.59223301
Bureaucracy	13.78640777
Not enough control at external borders	14.17475728
Social protection	17.2815534
Stronger say in the world	18.54368932
Economic prosperity	20.7
Cultural diversity	22.13592233
Paece	22.9
Euro	26.89320388
Democracy	29.51456311
Freedom to travel, study and work anywhere in...	51.74757282

Almost 52% of Romanians are understanding the European Union like opportunities for freedom to travel, study and work anywhere in the EU. Romanians need these liberties, they need to have an hopeful sentiment for the future of their life. Acest sentiment estemobilizantşiasigurădorința de apartenență la spațiul European. The European identity of Romanians is a positive one, they understand the European context as a possibility of personal evolution, as a path to a better life, as a sure way to civilization. Travel, education and work in the developed countries of the European Union represent the concrete form by which the Romanians understand that they can achieve an evolution in the mentioned directions. From the fourteen items according to which the respondents defined their perceptions about the European Union, seven can be considered positive, six negative and one neutral (euro, although the euro area can also be considered from a positive perspective, as a means of economic development). If we look at graph 1, it is clear that the positive items are forming a separate package in relation with negative items. These two clusters define the desire of the Romanian citizens to become part of the European Union and this is a very valuable feature for the development of the European space. But who are the 52% which want to travel, study and work in developed states of EU?

EU MEANING: TRAVEL/STUDY/WORK ABROAD * age Crosstabulation

		age					
		16 upto 20	21 upto 30	31 upto 40	41 upto 50	over 50	Total
EU MEANING: TRAVEL/STUDY/WORK ABROAD	Notmentioned	55,0%	42,2%	42,5%	49,3%	51,7%	48,0%
	Freedomtotravel, studyandworkanywhere in the EU	45,0%	57,8%	57,5%	50,7%	48,3%	52,0%
Total		100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

We see no big differences between age categories. Of course, the people over 50 years are not so motivate to study and work abroad, they have a stabile socio-economic condition, they know this age category is not so looked up on labor market. But they have children, nephews and friends, they may be hopeful for them. This is significant because it makes the desire to be part of the European space, a homogeneous feature within the Romanian population. This phenomenon further increases the value of the collective mind in Romania, regarding with the development of European Union objectives. Thus the Romanians become a model of good practices in relation with the identity construction of the European social space. Problems related to the construction of European identity can lead to major dysfunctions, which lead to regrettable breaks in the structure of the European Union. Such a case is what happens in British society, because Brexit is nothing more than a negative representation of social identity, from the perspective of belonging to the European space. It is obvious that the motivating factors of the British citizens are very different from those of the Romanian citizens, but the Romanians are a clear example of the fact that the motivating factors exist at the social level and the positive identity of belonging to the European space must be built and maintained, so that it ensures the durability of a social construction characterized by ambition and generosity.

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