

**Lyutviyeva Ya. P.**

*Senior lecturer, department of foreign languages and translation*

*Simon Kuznets Kharkiv National University of Economics*

## **BETWEEN FRAGMENTATION AND GLOBALIZATION**

The field of communication studies is pulled in different directions with constant fragmentation of research interests and increased connectivity among scholars around the world. Fragmentation intensifies centrifugal tendencies that drive inward-looking scholarship and deepen divides in communication research. Globalization, instead, sets conditions for bringing closer traditions of communication scholarship and expanding intellectual horizons beyond geographical and academic divisions.

Located at the crossroads of the humanities and the social sciences, the field developed as the result of the layering of disciplinary traditions and lines of inquiry concerned with issues broadly identified as “communication” in the United States [1]. The field evolved as the meeting point for myriad disciplines with different theoretical foundations and methodological approaches. Given this genealogy, the field developed without a common theoretical or conceptual core. It has been a decentered field, stringing together strands of scholarship with dissimilar intellectual provenance. Consequently, the field consolidated as the result of the aggregation of academic interests in communication broadly defined—interpersonal, organizational, mediated, media industries, cultural studies, information studies, language, rhetoric, intercultural, journalism, and media and information policies, among others. Different approaches to communication gradually consolidated in areas of specialization isolated from one another. This situation has raised concerns on the grounds that academic fields need well-defined, common theoretical questions and concepts as

well as shared lines of research [3], and it has motivated efforts to find cross-cutting theoretical, analytical, and methodological commonalities [2].

Fragmentation continues apace, adding more lines of research under the golf-size umbrella of communication studies. The “mediation of everything” [4] in contemporary societies has spawned new empirical questions related to communication. The ubiquity of digital information and communication technologies in everyday life is the subject of attention from distant corners of academia. Communication research is hardly contained by the conventional frontiers of the field as various disciplines are interested in communication issues. Today, one finds research about communication in information science and philosophy, rhetoric and sociology, public policy and political science, psychology and anthropology, as well as numerous interdisciplinary fields. Therefore, calls to find common theoretical and conceptual ground confront a challenging situation an ever-expanding, shifting field of research.

Simultaneously, the field of communication has become increasingly globalized in recent decades. Here globalization is understood as a process by which scholars and academic programs around the world become increasingly interconnected. The consolidation of international institutional networks of professional associations, conferences, research projects, journals, and books links communication scholarship across geographical borders.

The notion of academic globalization has a positive ring. As Sonia Livingstone observes, “If internationalization means exchanging knowledge and understanding across borders, then we would probably all sign up to it, confident that national approaches or concerns could find their place within this larger forum” [4, p. 274].

Globalization conjures ideals dear to the current academic imagination. It represents an invitation to join common spaces for the exchange of ideas beyond geographical boundaries. It is associated with de-Westernization and cosmopolitanism, an intellectual shift to abandon provincialism and embrace multiperspective analysis unshackled by the limitations of geography, place, or

identity. It dislocates geo-academic centrism by opening up perspectives beyond various forms of provincialism (e.g., geographical, theoretical, conceptual). It conveys the cultivation of an open intellectual mind. It dovetails with lofty educational ideals of shaping global citizens who are cognizant and open to the world beyond their immediate surroundings. It promises a way of formulating arguments unrestrained by national borders. It crystallizes a brand of academic multiculturalism that both recognizes and capitalizes on geocultural differences to expand intellectual horizons and enrich knowledge. In summary, academic globalization carries the promise of “knowledge without frontiers.”

A more pessimistic position views academic globalization as the handmaiden of the global imposition of Western academic cultures. Observers have warned of the dissolution of differences across “national” scholarships under the influence of norms and epistemologies associated with mainstream U.S. research. Globalization is viewed as the consolidation of multiple-tiered global academia featuring the supremacy of U.S. institutions and academic cultures and scholarly cultures from other regions in a subsidiary role. Within this line of argument about a hierarchical globalized academia, others believe that, rather than the supremacy of American academia, it signals the hegemony of theories, methodologies, and styles of thinking and writing identified with particular academic cultures of the North Atlantic.

Here “academic cultures” are understood as prevalent ways in which excellence is commonly defined and understood in scholarly work ways of thinking, argumentation styles, writing, public presentation. In Ringer’s definition, academic culture is the network of interrelated and explicit beliefs about the academic practices of teaching, learning, and research, and about the social significance of these practices.

What actually happens in the global encounters among academic cultures, however, is more complex than what either position expects and concludes. Hopes for de-Westernization, cosmopolitanism, and multiculturalism do not necessarily crystallize in unified values embraced by all. Wonderful wishes do not directly

translate into actual norms and practices. It is akin to hoping for world peace and mutual understanding without considering humanity's disgraceful historical record. Nor is it obvious that globalization necessarily crystallizes in the global domination of U.S. or Western European academic cultures and the displacement of intellectual styles indigenous to the global South.

In the case of communication studies, globalization accelerates the encountering of academic cultures, but impact on scholarly standards and perspectives cannot be determined *ex ante*. It might shape common definitions and expectations or, instead, deepen the Babelian condition of the field. It might cultivate cosmopolitan virtues or reaffirm local cultures. Just because scholars are globally networked, it does not follow that they share the same academic culture. Global connectivity neither leads to academic cosmopolitanism nor homogenized scholarship with strong Western accents.

These questions need to be approached from sociology of academic knowledge interested in understanding the historical weight of intellectual traditions and institutional conditions underpinning scholarship. The dynamics of globalization are only intelligible within the concrete conditions of knowledge production, namely, the institutional architecture and intellectual legacies that shape academic cultures.

## REFERENCES

1. Copley P. & Schultz P. J. Theories and models of communication. – Berlin, Germany: De Gruyter, 2013. – Vol. 1. – P. 223-240.
2. Craig R. T. Pragmatism in the field of communication theory. *Communication Theory*. – 2007. – 17(2). – P. 125–145.
3. Eadie W. F. Stories we tell: Fragmentation and convergence in communication disciplinary history. *Review of Communication*. – 2011. – 11(3). – P. 161–176.
4. Livingstone S. On the mediation of everything: ICA presidential address 2008 / *Journal of Communication*. – 2009. – 59(1). – P. 1–18.