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**ANALYSIS OF FACE TO FACE INTERCULTURAL
INTERACTIONS:**

Spike Lee's Do the Right Thing

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Resumen/ Resum:

This assignment is focused on using a fragment of a movie, in this case Spike Lee's *Do the Right Thing* to show problems found in intercultural communication between two different cultures and how difficult it may be sometimes not only to find those differences but also to fix the problems that may bring when translating. Using the country comparison tool of the 6-D Model developed by Professor Geert Hofstede we search for an insight into cultures from different countries. We see how small things affect us and how they grow up like a snowball rolling down a hill, just getting bigger and bigger. How gestures, being facial or kinesic can be more important than words. How everything counts.

Palabras clave/ Paraules clau: (5)

Culture; interculturality; communication; nonverbal; interaction.

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SPIKE LEE'S DO THE RIGHT THING

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1. INTRODUCTION

The focus of this assignment is the analysis of an intercultural communication interaction, which in this case is the analysis of a fragment of the Spike Lee's film "Do the Right Thing", a classic and one of Hollywood's most notable portrayals of modern-day racism tensions. Using this audiovisual fragment we make an analysis of the cultural differences we can easily find in just a small fragment, and how they are portrayed by the characters. We do a small introduction to intercultural communication, putting an emphasis on the term "culture", on its definition and on the problems we still have nowadays with it. Also, we use the 6-D Model developed by Professor Geert Hofstede to see how small things can affect a culture. How everything counts when talking about intercultural communication. This project shows us how important cultural aspects are in translating and interpreting. How nonverbal communication is as important as verbal communication as it sometimes transmits even more. It is not only important to be able to translate the things we say, but also the thing we do not say. We have to be able to translate and to transmit as much as possible.

In order to make this project possible, a hard work was put in the methodology. Starting from the bibliographic review that allowed me to start this project with a knowledge base, then the selection and transcription of the audiovisual material using the Conversation Analysis Model which afterwards I analyzed, dividing it depending on the communication dimensions until was able to reach a conclusion on the topic.

2. THEORY

Before starting the analysis we have to first explain what the concept of *intercultural communication* means. Intercultural communication can be defined as the sending and receiving of messages across languages and cultures.

Gudykunst (2000), a communication studies scholar, distinguishes it from cross-cultural studies of communication as follows:

‘Cross-cultural’ and ‘intercultural’ are often regarded as interchangeable. They are, nevertheless, different. Cross-cultural research involves comparing behaviour in two or more cultures (e.g. comparing self-disclosure in Japan, the USA and Iran when individuals interact with members of their own culture). Intercultural research involves examining behaviour when members of two or more cultures interact (e.g. examining self-disclosure when Japanese and Iranians communicate with each other). ... Understanding cross-cultural differences in behaviour is a prerequisite for understanding intercultural behaviour.

Gudykunst 2000: 314

It may seem as an easily understandable concept, but the difficulty comes from the understanding of the concepts that can be found in the expression intercultural communication or more important, the understanding of the word “culture”. Because, what is exactly a culture?

In 1952, the American anthropologists, Alfred Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn, critically reviewed concepts and definitions of culture, and compiled a list of 164 different definitions and many other authors came with their own definition of the term. As we can see in the following examples, even though

Culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behavior acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiment in artifacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e. historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values; cultural systems may on the one hand be considered as products of action, on the other, as conditional elements of further action.

(Kroeber and Kluckhohn 1952: 181; cited by Berry 2004: 168; cited in Spencer-Oatey, H. & Franklin P. 2009)

Culture consists of the derivatives of experience, more or less organised, learned or created by the individuals of a population, including those images or encodements and their interpretations (meanings) transmitted from past generations, from contemporaries, or formed by individuals themselves.

(T. Schwartz 1992; cited by Avruch 1998: 17; cited in Spencer-Oatey, H. & Franklin P. 2009;)

Man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun. I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law, but an interpretive one in search of meaning.

(Geertz 1973: 5; cited in Spencer-Oatey, H. & Franklin P. 2009)

[...] the set of attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors shared by a group of people, but different for each individual, communicated from one generation to the next.

(Matsumoto 1996: 16; cited in Spencer- Oatey, H. & Franklin P. 2009)

Culture is to society what memory is to the person. It specifies designs for living that have proven effective in the past, ways of dealing with social situations, and ways to think about the self and social behavior that have been reinforced in the past. It includes systems of symbols that facilitate interaction (Geertz 1973), rules of the game of life that have been shown to ‘work’ in the past. When a person is socialized in a given culture, the person can use custom as a substitute for thought, and save time.

(Triandis 1989: 511–12; cited in Spencer- Oatey, H. & Franklin P. 2009)

Culture is a fuzzy set of basic assumptions and values, orientations to life, beliefs, policies, procedures and behavioural conventions that are shared by a group of people, and that influence (but do not determine) each member’s behaviour and his/her interpretations of the ‘meaning’ of other people’s behaviour.

(Spencer-Oatey 2008b: 3; cited in Spencer- Oatey, H. & Franklin P. 2009)

Culture is a universal orientation system very typical of a society, organization or group. [...] It influences the perceiving, thinking, evaluating and acting of all its members and thus defines their affiliation to the culture. Culture as an orientation system structures a specific field of action for those who feel affiliated to this culture and thus creates the prerequisites for developing its own ways of coping with its environment.

(Thomas 1996a: 112; translated by Franklin. Cited in Spencer- Oatey, H. & Franklin P. 2009)

To study culture is to study ideas, experiences, feelings, as well as the external forms that such internalities take as they are made public, available to the senses and thus truly social. For culture, in the anthropological view, are the meanings which people create, and which create people, as members of societies. [...] On the one hand, culture resides in a set of public meaningful forms [...]. On the other hand, these overt forms are only rendered meaningful because human minds contain the instruments for their interpretation. The cultural flow thus consists of the externalizations of meaning which individuals produce through arrangements of overt forms, and the interpretations which individuals make of such displays – those of others as well as their own.

(Hannerz 1992: 3–4; cited in Spencer- Oatey, H. & Franklin P. 2009)

According to Spencer-Oatey and Franklin (2009) we can see in all these examples that the following common characteristics of culture can be found in all of them:

- Culture is manifested through different types of regularities, some of which are more explicit than others.

- Culture is associated with social groups, but no two individuals within a group share exactly the same cultural characteristics.
- Culture affects people's behaviour and interpretations of behaviour.
- Culture is acquired and/or constructed through interaction with others.

Of course, when talking about culture, nowadays we mostly use the term to define how it influences us. According to Professor Geert Hofstede the National Culture - the values that distinguished country cultures from each other- could be statistically categorized into six groups. These six dimensions can give us an insight into other culture that can improve our effectiveness when interacting with people belonging to different cultures. His 6-D model is able to present us an overview into both the country we want to, as well as making it possible to compare different cultures based on this model found in the Hofstede Center webpage¹, a web page that provides us with insights in Hofstede's research and the research of his colleagues into national and organizational culture.

- The first dimension measured by this model is the **Power Distance (PDI)**. This expresses the degree to which the less powerful members of a society accept and expect that power is distributed unequally. In other words, how a society handles inequalities among people, as normally people in societies with a large degree of power distance have an easier time accepting a hierarchical order in which everybody has a place and which needs no further justification, while in low power distance societies, it happens the contrary. People strive to equalize the distribution of power and tend to demand justification for inequalities of power.
- The second dimension is the so called **Individualism versus collectivism (IDV)**. In this case the Individualism can be defined as a social framework in which individuals are only expected to take care of themselves and their immediate families. On the other hand, the Collectivism represents a preference for a framework in which individuals can expect their relatives or members of a particular in-group to look after them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty.
- The third dimension is **Masculinity versus femininity (MAS)**. Here we are talking about how the masculinity side of this dimension represents a preference in society for achievement, heroism, assertiveness and material reward for success; A more competitive society. Its opposite, femininity, stands for a preference for cooperation, modesty, caring for the weak and quality of life, which means a more consensus-oriented society.
- The fourth dimension is the **Uncertainty avoidance (UAI)** which expresses the degree to which the members of a society feel uncomfortable with uncertainty and ambiguity. This is about how a society deals with the fact that the future and whether should we try to control the future or just let it happen. Countries that exhibiting strong UAI are maintaining rigid codes of belief and behavior and are intolerant of unorthodox behavior and ideas. Weak UAI societies maintain a more relaxed attitude in which practice counts more than principles.

¹ The Hofstede Center www.geert-hofstede.com

- Dimension number five is all about the **Long-term versus short-term orientation (LTO)** which can be interpreted as dealing with society's search for virtue. Societies with a short-term orientation generally have a strong concern with establishing the absolute Truth, as they are normative in their thinking. They exhibit great respect for traditions, a relatively small propensity to save for the future, and a focus on achieving quick results. In societies with a long-term orientation, people believe that truth depends very much on situation, context and time. They show an ability to adapt traditions to changed conditions, a strong propensity to save and invest thriftiness, and perseverance in achieving results.
- The sixth and last dimension is the one called **Indulgence versus Restraint (IVR)**. In this case indulgence stands for a society that allows relatively free gratification of basic and natural human drives related to enjoying life and having fun while restraint stands for a society that suppresses gratification of needs and regulates it by means of strict social norms.

Using the country comparison tool available on the webpage of The Hofstede Center, we can get a good overview of the deep drivers of The United States' culture relative to other cultures. In this exact case, when comparing The United States and Mozambique we get these facts. Due to the extraordinary value of the following data, I decided that quoting directly all the information from the webpage is the best way to proceed. Also, regarding my decision to choose Mozambique in this comparison, I decided that, since in the situation that I am analyzing the interaction is between an Anglo white American and many African Americans and Hofstede does not explain national and organizational culture from the point of view of African American culture, data from a African culture, although not entirely equivalent to the African American culture may be of use to demonstrate the differences between cultures.

When looking at the scores of both Mozambique and The United States we find that:

Power distance

Mozambique's very high score of 85 indicates that it is a strongly hierarchical society. This means that people accept a hierarchical order in which everybody has a place and which needs no further justification. Hierarchy in an organization is seen as reflecting inherent inequalities, centralization is popular, subordinates expect to be told what to do and the ideal boss is a benevolent autocrat.

Individualism

With a very low score of 15, Mozambique is considered a collectivistic society. This is evident in a close, long-term commitment to the member 'group', be that a family, extended family, or extended relationships. Loyalty in a collectivist culture is paramount and overrides most other societal rules and regulations. The society fosters strong relationships where everyone takes responsibility for fellow members of their group. In collectivist societies: offence leads to shame and the loss of face, employer/employee relationships are perceived in moral terms (like a family link), hiring and promotion decisions take account of the employee's in-group and management is the management of groups.

On the other hand, The United States present on of the most individualistic (91) cultures in the world which when combined with the very low score of Power Distance, just 40, makes it reflects itself in the following:

- The American premise of "liberty and justice for all." This is evidenced by an explicit emphasis on equal rights in all aspects of American society and government.
- Within American organizations, hierarchy is established for convenience, superiors are accessible and managers rely on individual employees and teams for their expertise.
- Both managers and employees expect to be consulted and information is shared frequently. At the same time, communication is informal, direct and participative to a degree.
- The society is loosely-knit in which the expectation is that people look after themselves and their immediate families only and should not rely (too much) on authorities for support.
- There is also a high degree of geographical mobility in the United States. Americans are the best joiners in the world; however it is often difficult, especially among men, to develop deep friendships.
- Americans are accustomed to doing business or interacting with people they don't know well. Consequently, Americans are not shy about approaching their prospective counterparts in order to obtain or seek information. In the business world, employees are expected to be self-reliant and display initiative. Also, within the exchange-based world of work we see that hiring, promotion and decisions are based on merit or evidence of what one has done or can do.

Masculinity

A low score (feminine) on the dimension means that the dominant values in society are caring for others and quality of life. A feminine society is one where quality of life is the sign of success and standing out from the crowd is not admirable. The fundamental issue here is what motivates people, wanting to be the best (masculine) or liking what you do (feminine).

A relatively low score of 38 means that Mozambique is considered a feminine society. In feminine countries the focus is on "working in order to live", managers strive for consensus, people value equality, solidarity and quality in their working lives. Conflicts are resolved by compromise and negotiation. Incentives such as free time and flexibility are favored. Focus is on well-being and status is not shown or emphasized.

The score of the US on Masculinity is high at 62, and this can be seen in the typical American behavioral patterns. This can be explained by the combination of a high Masculinity drive together with the most individualistic drive in the world. In other words, Americans, so to speak, all show their masculine drive individually.

This American combination reflects itself in the following:

- Behavior in school, work, and play are based on the shared values that people should “strive to be the best they can be” and that “the winner takes all”. As a result, Americans will tend to display and talk freely about their “successes” and achievements in life. Being successful per se is not the great motivator in American society, but being able to show one’s success
- Many American assessment systems are based on precise target setting, by which American employees can show how well a job they did.
- There exists a “can-do” mentality which creates a lot of dynamism in the society, as it is believed that there is always the possibility to do things in a better way
- Typically, Americans “live to work” so that they can obtain monetary rewards and as a consequence attain higher status based on how good one can be. Many white collar workers will move to a fancier neighborhood after each and every substantial promotion.
- It is believed that a certain degree of conflict will bring out the best of people, as it is the goal to be “the winner”. As a consequence, we see a lot of polarization and court cases. This mentality nowadays undermines the American premise of “liberty and justice for all.” Rising inequality is endangering democracy, because a widening gap among the classes may slowly push Power Distance up and Individualism down.

Uncertainty avoidance

With a low score of 44, Mozambique is a fairly pragmatic culture in terms of uncertainty avoidance. This means that both generalists and experts are needed. There is a focus on planning, and these plans can be altered at short notice and improvisations made. Emotions are not shown much in these societies; people are fairly relaxed and not averse to taking risks. Consequently, there is a larger degree of acceptance for new ideas, innovative products and a willingness to try something new or different, whether it pertains to technology, business practices, or food.

The US scores below average, with a low score of 46, on the Uncertainty Avoidance dimension. As a consequence, the perceived context in which Americans find themselves will impact their behavior more than if the culture would have either scored higher or lower. Thus, this cultural pattern reflects itself as follows:

- There is a fair degree of acceptance for new ideas, innovative products and a willingness to try something new or different, whether it pertains to technology, business practices or food. Americans tend to be more tolerant of ideas or opinions from anyone and allow the freedom of expression.
- At the same time, Americans do not require a lot of rules and are less emotionally expressive than higher-scoring cultures. At the same time, 9/11 has created a lot of fear in the American society culminating in the efforts of government to monitor everybody through the NSA and other security organizations.

Pragmatism

An extremely low score of 11 on this dimension means, therefore, that Mozambique has a normative culture. People in such societies have a strong concern with establishing the absolute Truth; they are normative in

their thinking. They exhibit great respect for traditions, a relatively small propensity to save for the future, and a focus on achieving quick results.

The United States scores normative on the fifth dimension with a low score of 26. This is reflected by the following:

- Americans are prone to analyze new information to check whether it is true. Thus, the culture doesn't make most Americans pragmatic, but this should not be confused with the fact that Americans are very practical, being reflected by the "can-do" mentality mentioned above.
- The polarization mentioned above is, so to speak, strengthened by the fact that many Americans have very strong ideas about what is "good" and "evil". This may concern issues such as abortion, use of drugs, euthanasia, weapons or the size and rights of the government versus the States and versus citizens.
- The US is the one of the only "Caucasian" countries in the world where, since the beginning of the 20th century, visiting church has increased. This increase is also evident in some post-Soviet republics such as Russia.
- American businesses measure their performance on a short-term basis, with profit and loss statements being issued on a quarterly basis. This also drives individuals to strive for quick results within the work place.

Indulgence

Mozambique is an indulgent country. This is attested to by its very high score of 80 in this dimension. People in societies with a high score in indulgence generally exhibit a willingness to fulfill their impulses and desires, especially with regard to enjoying life and having fun. They possess a positive attitude and have a tendency towards optimism. In addition, they place a higher degree of importance on leisure time, act as they please and spend money as they wish.

The United States scores as an indulgent (68) society on the sixth dimension. This, in combination with a normative score, is reflected by the following contradictory attitudes and behavior:

- Work hard and play hard.
- The States has waged a war against drugs and is still very busy in doing so, yet drug addiction in the States is higher than in many other wealthy countries.
- It is a prudish society yet even some well-known televangelists appear to be immoral.

To sum up we can say that this all means that both cultures are as different as possible, as while Mozambique is a country with a high score of Power distance and Indulgence, more than double than The United States in case of the Power distance score, is a country that also has lower scores than The United States in Individualism, Masculinity, Uncertainty Avoidance and Pragmatism. While Mozambique is a country that presents a strongly hierarchical society and an indulgent country, The United States, on the other hand, present a more individualistic, feminine and normative society.

Both cultures are very different, but at the same time, very similar. Nowadays, in the twenty-first century, we all live in a global village. A global village that according to Chen, G.-M & Starosta, W. J. (2008) has been transformed by several important trends, five to be more specific: technology development, globalization and economy, widespread population migrations, development of multiculturalism and the demise of the nation-state. These trends have combined to make the existence of intercultural communication competence indispensable. Even though the world has become more interdependent and interconnected and nation-state has become more culturally heterogeneous, there are more and more people aware of their multiple identities and are able to maintain a multicultural coexistence in order to develop a “global civic culture” (Boulding, 1998). This enables us to demonstrate “tolerance for differences and mutual respect among cultures as a mark of enlightened national and global citizenship” in individual, social, business and political institutions levels (Belay, 1993).

In order to define the communication competence we need to understand two concepts: effectiveness and appropriateness. The first concept, effectiveness, according to Wiemann (1977, p. 198) can be synthesized as:

[...]the ability of an interactant to choose among available communicative behaviors in order that he may successfully accomplish his own interpersonal goals during an encounter while maintaining the face and line of his fellow interactants within the constraints of the situation[...]

Other scholars look at the concept of communications competence from the viewpoint of appropriateness. Wiemann and Backlund (1980) explain it as follows:

Appropriateness generally refers to the ability of an interactant to meet the basic contextual requirements of the situation- to be effective in general sense... These contextual requirements include:

- The verbal context, that is, making sense in terms of wording, of statement, and of topic;
- The relationship context, that is, the structuring, type and style of messages so that they are consonant with the particular relationship at hand;
- The environmental context, that is, the consideration of constraints imposed on message making by the symbolic and physical environments.

3. CONTEXTUALIZATION OF THE AUDIOVISUAL MATERIAL

Violence as a way of achieving racial justice is both impractical and immoral. It is impractical because it is a descending spiral ending in destruction for all. The old law of an eye for an eye leaves everybody blind. It is immoral because it seeks to humiliate the opponent rather than win his understanding; it seeks to annihilate rather than to convert. Violence is immoral because it thrives on hatred rather than love. It destroys a community and makes brotherhood impossible. It leaves society in monologue rather than dialogue. Violence ends by defeating itself. It creates bitterness in the survivors and brutality in the destroyers.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

On June 30th 1989, *Do the Right Thing*, a film by the writer-director Spike Lee was release in theaters all over U.S. The film can be described as a provocative, racially charged drama that takes place on one block in Brooklyn's Bedford on the hottest day of the year.

It was inspired by true life accounts: on December 20 1986, a 23-year-old African-American construction worker named Michael Griffith was killed after being chased by an Italian-American mob in Howard Beach, Brooklyn.

Griffith, together with two black friends, Cedric Saniford and Timothy Grimes, got in a trouble when their car broke down in front of a pizza parlour. They decided to enter it, hoping to call for help, but when they were refused the use of the phone they sat down to eat. Soon after, two police officers appeared answering a call citing 'three suspicious black males' walked in, but left as soon as the acknowledged the calls were unwarranted. Thereafter, a group of white men — among who were identified John Lester, Scott Kern and Jason Landone — entered and then chased the black youths out of the pizzeria towards

a gang of accomplices that were waiting for them armed with baseball bats. Grimes escaped after he pulled a knife on his attackers; Saniford was knocked unconscious, and, as a severely beaten Griffith tried to stagger away from his pursuers, he wandered onto the busy Belt Parkway where he was hit and killed by a passing automobile.

After the events went public, New York erupted, witnessing its largest black protest rallies since the civil rights movement.

Many of these details are used in the film, but still, we can easily see that it is not a recollection of happenings based on real life facts, but more, much more.

A single block, in a New York neighborhood, on a broiling summer day, is the setting used for *Do the Right Thing*. There is the block's old couple, the eternally squabbling Da Mayor and Mother Sister. There is big, silent Radio Raheem, and his thundering boom box, with its dozens of batteries. There is Buggin' Out, a guy permanently on edge that is quick to take offense at everything, from a racial slur to a scuff on his Jordans. There are the two suspicious heirs to the block's pizza joint, Vito and Pino. Officer Ponte and Officer Long cruise the block, waiting for the neighborhood to kindle and then detonate in the hot summer sun. And finally, there is Mookie, the pizza delivery guy, the block's small black sparkplug, and his white boss, Sal, of Sal's Famous Pizzeria.

Due to its incendiary portrayal of race relations, the film's release was specially programmed to influence the Democratic primary for mayor of New York City, in order to contribute to Mayor Koch's downfall and David Dinkins' victory. This victory made him the first black mayor of New York City.

Critics all over America were up in arms over it as like David Denby in *New York* magazine, Richard Corliss in *Time*, and Jeanne Williams of *USA Today*, they all argued that *Do The Right Thing* was of no value except as agit-prop to incite the black community to riot.

Of course all this criticism was met with fury and Monty Ross declared:

That is folks not doing their homework. Black people do not riot because they go see a movie. It's not that intense. It's not like it used to be in the sixties where it was expedient to start a riot. When black folks go to the movies, they've given up their money and, just like everybody else, they're thinking first of all it better be a damn good movie...

Still, above all the controversy, *Do the Right Thing* is considered one of the best movies of the century, even though it is just a movie about a hot summer day.

4. TRANSCRIPT OF A FRAGMENT OF THE SELECTED AUDIOVISUAL MATERIAL

The following transcript can be found in the selected audiovisual material from the minute 07.40 to the minute 09:19.

Symbols used in the transcripts:

GOOD: Elevation of tone and intensity

Children: emphatic pronunciation provocation or very careful speech

<I think I>: fast speech, with change in the melodic line

((XXX)): indecipherable fragment

((Watch)): doubtful fragment

("breathing") the transcriber comment

laaa: vowel lengthening

eeeh: filling of Silence

mm mm: audible turn-taking request

hm hm: assent, compliance

ha ha: laugh

said[the house

me] told me: beginning and end of overlapping

=: Immediate succession without pause

(.): Brief but significant pause less than 1 second

(2.5): more than 1 second pauses

↑: Rising intonation

Characters: BUGGIN' OUT, CLIFTON, AHMAD, ELLA, CEE, PUNCHY

In this scene transcribed here we can see a black guy, Buggin' Out, on the street when a white guy, Clifton stumbles while walking with his bike and steps on his shoes. Clifton keeps walking unnoticed this, but Buggin' Out does, so he starts running after him. He asks for an apology and then, as his friends come to see what happened starts discussing with Clifton. All of his friends start making commentaries meant to further the argument and to start a fight.

BUGGIN' OUT: YO (3) <damn>YO (“starts running”)
CLIFTON: (2) Yeeeah↑ (“turns around ”)
BUGGIN' OUT: (7)<you almost knocked me down man ↑> the word is excuse me (.)
CLIFTON: ahh excuse me = i'm sorry
BUGGIN' OUT: (“friends coming”) not only did you knock me down, you stepped on my brand new white air jordans i just bought and that's all you can say is excuse me↑
CLIFTON: are you serious↑ (“surprised”)
BUGGIN' OUT: YEAH, I'M SERIOUS i'll fuck you up quick TWO TIMES
AHMAD: TWO TIMES
BUGGIN' OUT: who told you to step on my sneakers↑ (.) who told you to walk on my side of the block↑ (.) who told you to be in my neighborhood↑ (.) (“Ahmad is agreeing with every comment”)
CLIFTON: i own this brownstone (.) (“signaling and everyone turns to look”)
BUGGIN' OUT: who told you to buy a brownstone on my block (.) in my neighborhood (.) on my side of the street↑
BUGGIN' OUT: yo, why'd do you want to live in a BLACK neighborhood for

anyway↑ MOTHERFUCK GENTRUFICATION

ELLA: weell↑

CLIFTON: as i understand is a free country (.) man can live where ever
he want

AHMAD: [a free country↑

BUGGIN' OUT: A FREE COUNTRY↑]

BUGGIN' OUT: maan i should fuck you up for saying that stupid shit aloone

AHMAD: yoo maaan (.) your Jordans are FUCKED UP

CEE: daaaamn,maaan (.)< you might as well throw 'em shits out>
them shits is broke

PUNCHY: <man and they looked good before he messed them up= he
did this shit on purpose man> he was even talking about your [MOMMA

ELLA/CEE/AHMAD: UHHHH]

ELLA: you used to be so FINE

AHMAD: yo,man (.) how much did you pay for them↑

CEE: A HUNDRED BUCKS

ELLA: american↑ dollars

PUNCHY: a hundred and eight with tax

AHMAD: i'd give him a hundred headaches

BUGGIN' OUT: you're lucky the BLACKMAN has a loving heart (.) <next
time you see me coming you cross the street quick>

CLIFTON: i'm out of here

ELLA: yo man↑ BREAK HIS FEET

AHMAD: TAKE HIS BIKE

BUGGIN' OUT: i should make you buy me another pair↑

PUNCHY: [YOU SHOULD WOOP HIS ASS

AHMAD: TAKE HIS BIKE

CEE: KICK HIS ASS]

BUGGIN' OUT: MAN YOU'RE LUCKY I'M A RIGHTEOUS BLACK MAN
OR ELSE YOU'S BE IN SERIOUS TROUBLE MAN (.) SERIOUS

ELLA: [fuck him up

AHMAD: man we should fuck him up↑]
BUGGIN' OUT: (“thinking”) STAY WATCH OR MOVE BACK TO
MASSACHUSSET
CLIFTON: ahhh i was born in brooklyn
ALL: AW MAAAN (.) (“trow their hands in the air”) GET OUTTA
HERE ((XXX))

5. ANALYSIS OF THE PROBLEMS OF INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION THAT ARE OBSERVED IN THE TRANSCRIBED FRAGMENT

According to Raga (2003), analyzing the problems that may arise during an intercultural situation can be easily done using just some simple premises. In first place we have to take in account that different individuals belonging to different cultures may apply different models of communication in colloquial conversations. Many could apply the distant model while many as well would use the closer model instead of the standard model while having a conversation. In this transcribed fragment we can see that while Clifton is using a more standard and distant speech model, the rest of the people that are participating in the conversation together with Buggin' out are using a much less formal and closer model of speaking.

When analyzing the language we can use the speech maxims in order to help us define better the situation. The first maxim is the maxim of quantity. It seems that normally those cultures that use a more distant speech model tend to give much less information relevant to the conversation that cultures with a closer speech model. This may create intercultural conversation problems as we can see, for example in our transcript fragment, when Buggin' out says to Clifton:

“Who told you to step on my sneakers? Who told you to walk on my side of the block? Who told you to be in my neighborhood?” or “Yo, why do you want to live in a Black neighborhood anyway? ”

This need for information and the quantity of questions asked makes Buggin' out seem like a very rude person and turns the conversation more violent. Clifton, on the other hand, as he belongs to a culture with a distant speech model in which you do not give and you are not going to be asked for unnecessary personal information tries to answer with short phrases “I own this brownstone.” or with silence as he sees that the situation may turn much more violent.

The second is the maxim of veracity. In this case, we see that this maxim has been transgressed many times by Buggin' out and the rest of the people that `support' him, as the reason for the discussion is Clifton dirtying his shoes. A small enough issue to be forgiven after a given “Excuse me. I'm sorry.” but that escalates quickly when instead of saying

'It's okay.' Buggin' out says "Not only did you knock me down, you stepped on my brand new new white Air Jordans I just bought and that's all you can say, is "Excuse me?"" after he asked for an apology. The inability to let it go and the presence of the rest of his friends that intervened in the conversation transformed the conversation in a full blown, but more or less one-sided discussion. The friends, instead intervening to stop it from getting to that point, made more arguments in order to start a fight, as we can see when Punchy said: "He did this shit on purpose man, he was even talking about your momma!". As we can see in this comment, the mother part was totally invented and only intended to start a fight.

The next concept we use is the maxim of manner. In this case in particular we see this maxim when talking about compliments and how they are a means of trying to further the conversation. Here we can find how the friends all try to use compliment to make Buggin' out angrier, as we can see when Ella says "You used to be so fine" or when Punchy said "Man, and they looked good before he messed them up." We can also see, that while Clifton uses a more formal register, both Buggin' out and his friends use a more informal register full of jargon, swear words and informal forms of treatment. We can find example for this all over the transcription, like for example "[...]I'll fuck you up [...]" "Motherfuck gentrification", when Ahmad says "Yo man, your Jordans are fucked up!", when Punchy says "Damn,man, you might as well throw 'em shits out. Them shits is broke." There are also a lot of expressions that may sound aggressive to other interlocutors as "Yo man, break his feet." "You should woop his ass" or even "Stay watch or move back to Massachussets."

When talking about paralinguistics we can see that the emphasis put on the information can cause intercultural communication problems as we can view in the audiovisual fragment or in the transcription when the emphasis is put on for example on the fact that it was a 'black neighborhood' or on the price of the shoes. The price in particular is emphasized as they are trying to use it as an argument. We can see this in the transcription when Ahmad asks "Yo,man how much did you pay for them?", Cee answers "A hundred bucks!" and Ella clarifies it saying "American dollars" with Punchy ending the emphasis saying "A hundred and eight with tax!".

Also, when talking about non-phonological sound characteristics like volume, speed or maintained pronunciation we can say that we can really see the differences between cultures. While Buggin' out, Ahmed, Cee, Ella and Punchy use a higher speech volume,

Clifton tries to maintain a lower one, only increasing the volume of his voice in the end, using it to show his frustration with the situation he is in. Also, while he uses a slower speed and is careful with his pronunciation, the rest speak as fast as they can, sometimes even overlapping themselves and not really maintaining a pronunciation, causing indecipherable sentences. This contrast between cultures is displayed during all the argument between the characters.

Regarding the time distribution within the conversation we can say that the problems derived from this are more serious and more difficult to solve because, as Raga (2003) said it is because of two reasons:

[...]first because most likely we are even less aware of their cultural variety, and secondly, because these problems affect the conversational dynamics itself, and can cause even the interaction takes place.

In this case, as we can see, Clifton belongs, as we said before, to a culture which uses a distant speech model, so he is used to taking his time when speaking and having small breaks. On the other hand Buggin' out and his friends belong to a culture when timing is much less important, where there are no breaks, so the people are used to speaking almost as soon as the other person stops speaking, sometimes even before. That is why we can say that this whole conversation/ discussion is mostly one-sided, because the timing of it is so fast that Clifton can only say something when they make a break and give him time to speak. We can see that when Ella asks him "Well?" because he was not answering fast enough and the fact that in this whole transcript he only makes six interventions in the conversation.

This happens because as Kochman (1990: 199) says, African Americans have a very symmetrical pattern of temporal distribution, which is known as model "answer-call", which is characterized by overlapping and continuous continuers, and the absence of silence. When African Americans speak to white people they have the impression that they are not listening, while white people think that African-Americans are constantly interrupting. They tend to share speaking turns instead of each having their one, as well as entering directly into a conversation, using no greeting and no invitation. For white people, this type of speech may seem aggressive as they can find it strange for other people to get in a discussion that has nothing to do with them.

The last thing to talk about is the non-verbal language of the fragment. All about facial, hand and body gestures, maintained looks, rapprochement between interlocutors, contact etc. We can say the same thing as before. We can see the contrast between cultures all over the fragment. While Clifton is a person that maintains or at least tries to maintain the distance between himself and Buggin' out, the other has no problem with his friends getting millimeters from him. He shows no need for personal space or at least shows no discomfort with the lack of it. The others keep making contact with him during the conversation, intending to show both their support in case of a fight taking place as well as trying to start a fight.

Clifton also tries to maintain visual contact between them, as we can see as he looks at Buggin' out straight in the eyes during the conversation, while Buggin' out and the rest keep looking in different places all over the discussion, never maintaining long glances with each other. This happens mostly because, in this discussion, even if Clifton is outnumbered, he still is right about the situation and takes it as an exaggeration. Buggin' out and the rest know that even though they talk/shout a lot they cannot really do more, as there is no real reason for it. They just use their voices to compensate for this.

While talking about facial, hand and body gestures, we can say, that in this case we can see that African American people tend to be more expressive, to use more kinesic movements, to send more information with their bodies.

In the fragment, while Clifton shows pretty much no emotions at all, except on a small instance when we can see disbelief showing on his face just from the beginning shows us that Buggin' out is much more expressive, from the first moment when his disbelief is shown on his face, and then with all the pointing and effusive hand gestures. The same can be said about his friends, they too make very effusive hand gestures and more expressive faces. We can see that, even though on Buggin' Out's face there is an almost permanent expression of displeasure, the rest of the gang shows different expressions, going from giddiness (Ahmad 08.22) to boredom (Ella 08.30). There are also many more moments during the fragment when the camera is focused only on their faces as they transmit much more information to the audience than the speech.

Regarding the hand and body gestures, we can also say that both Clifton and Buggin' out are as different as day and night. The rest of the gang are the same or even

more effusive as Buggin' out, using hand gestures to express more information, be it either anger, displeasure or just trying to further the conversation on a pathway leading to a fight. They use hand gestures to try and make their points, to support their arguments. They exaggerate the gestures to compensate for the knowledge that they are wrong and that they are having a discussion with no reason at all.

6. SUMMARY

It may seem that as long as we understand that there are different cultures all over the world all coexisting, we should not have any problem communicating. But, as we already saw, culture is not a concept easy to define or to understand. And without understanding the concept we should accept that many difficulties may arise whenever we communicate. We have to accept that each country has their own characteristic culture, but that not every person is the same. Culture depends on the people, and even in a group of people that may seem that are from the same culture we may even find differences among them.

Differences that may seem very small but that can impede the progress of a conversation. But of course, in the end, it all depends on the people. If we are open-minded, and we enter a conversation taking in account that we have to be careful of what and how we say things when speaking with people from different cultures we may be able to avoid many of the problems that may arise. We have to remember that, just because we are using one kind of speech modal which rest of the world may not. We have to be patient and thoughtful and ready to explain ourselves or to apologize in case we make any mistakes.

We see, that just like in the case presented in the audiovisual material and in the transcription, the smallest thing that may seem insignificant can cause an argument. We have to think before acting or before speaking. We have to think of ourselves. We live in a global village. We're not alone and we have to do our best to keep it that way. Communication is the key.

And sometimes intercultural communications are the most difficult thing to translate. A good translator has to be able to translate a text/conversation/transcription with so many different nuances that it may sound normal to everybody. It has to be able to adapt the text depending on the cultures. Not everybody acts and speaks the same, so not everything has to be translated with a standard in mind. We have to adapt, we have to try and focus on the character, on how he is, on how he is defined, in his nuances. It is not easy

to translate cultural differences. It is not easy to translate just culture in general. But we have to do it, and do I good, because as I said before communication is key.

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