

INFORMACIJOS IR ŽINIŲ VADYBA

The Management of Environmental Discourse in Knowledge Society

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This article reports on the results of a piloting study on the multidimensional comprehension of environmental phenomena for better communication.

Fifty students from two faculties of LUA (Faculty of Social Sciences and Faculty of Engineering) were engaged in the research. The Model of Environments' Holistic Interpretation (worked out by Bulgarian and Latvian scientists) was presented to respondents by the University teachers. Students accepted that an environmental phenomenon should be treated holistically (spiritual, subjective, social and physical environments interact). Respondents have also certified that there exists common experience for all humans of our planet, which could root in eternal values of love, compassion, tolerance, empathy, etc.

The piloting study proved that knowledge society would accept the holistic method of the management of different social processes developing in global society nowadays.

Key words: *knowledge society, environment, holistic, management, communication.*

Introduction

The terrestrial civilization is striving to reach the level of knowledge society which is considered to be the highest standard of development of contemporary global community. Latvian Academician R. Karnīte has pointed out that the concept *knowledge society* has become a cornerstone of nations' prosperity vision. On the way towards this goal, humans are facing considerable obstacles: global economic crises, political discords, ecological disbalance and the lack of effective management of problems.

The author of the article supposes that the Western way of dualistic perception and interpretation of any discourse, including also the environmental phenomena, turns out to be a serious hindrance influencing even the management dimension of cross-cultural communication.

Different scholars (Hartley, Kim et. al.) have studied environmental discourse mainly focusing on diverse aspects of the phenomenon, leaving the holistic interpretation of the theme still open.

The author of this article considers the holistic approach to be most effective in

the process of solving the global problems in order to reach the level of knowledge society.

The object of the research is the process of environmental comprehension in cross-cultural communication.

The subject of the research is the management of environmental discourse.

The hypothesis is as follows: global community will proceed to knowledge society more effectively if it accepts a holistic, multidimensional comprehension of environmental phenomena for cross-cultural communication.

The primary objective is to state how university students comprehend environmental phenomena.

The main tasks of the research:

- to analyse scientific literature on the management of environmental discourse;
- to carry out practical research on the interpretation and comprehension of environmental phenomena by university students;
- to prove that the holistic management of environmental discourse helps people communicate over the borders and proceed towards knowledge society.

Methods

The practical and theoretical interdisciplinary study (in linguistics, communication sciences and psychology) includes research data obtained at the Latvia University of Agriculture in October 2009.

Respondents: 50 bachelor students of Faculty of Social Sciences and Faculty of Engineering.

The instrument used in the practical research to obtain the necessary data was

the questionnaire “Significance of Multi-dimensional Comprehension of Environmental Discourse” (100 pages of interview material in total). The respondents were asked to provide answers to ten clearly and completely formulated questions. It should be mentioned that 88% of respondents were young women aged 20–24.

Answers to five questions were categorized as: *yes*, *no* and *partially*, and then a quantitative analysis of the frequency of these categories was done. Answers to another five questions were open-ended. They were surveyed applying the qualitative approach – semantic analyses that helped state the semantic frequency of similar notions and after generalizing them point out the strikingness inside the meaning of a definite structure. The methodology of V. Levickis and I. Sternin was utilized (Левитский В. В., Стернин И. А., 1989).

Results

The majority part of contemporary scholars accept the interrelationship among global economic, political, environmental, cross-cultural and other processes. Taking into consideration the theories of Ch. Hardy (Environment’s ENDO and EXO-context), G. G. Gibson (ecological theory of perception), F. Varela (enaction theory), M. Steger (globalization) and H. H. Dalai Lama’s recommendations on the topic, scholars of Sofia University (Bulgaria) and Latvia University of Agriculture worked out model of the holistic interpretation of the environment.

The authors suggest that any system, being part of spiritual environment or universal field of information, interacts with it on the level that depends on the system’s

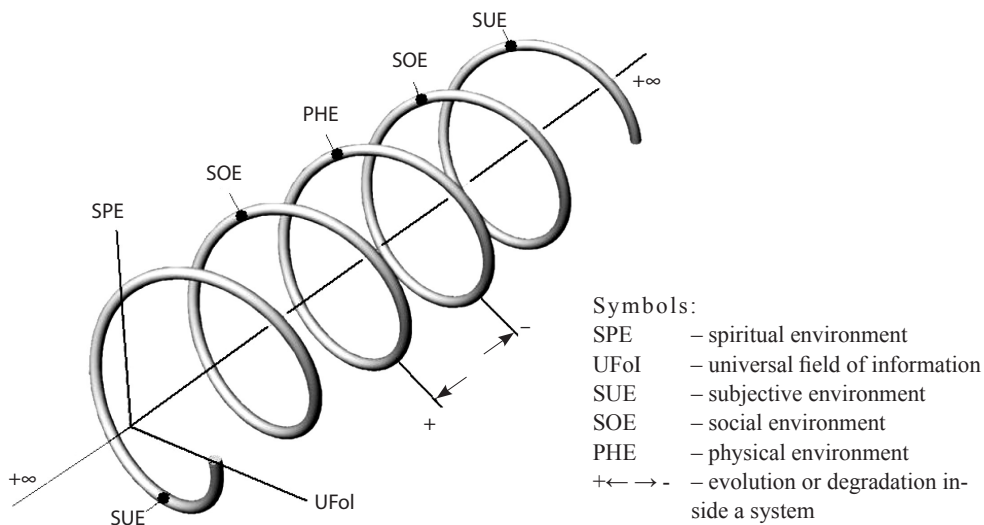


Figure 1. The model of the holistic interpretation of the environment

subjective environment (mind field) which, in its turn, creates the social and physical environments that further on influence the changeable subjective environment (following the rules of impermanence and the cause and effect).

The whole system could be in the state of development or degradation, always containing the opposite potential (Mavrodieva, Putniņa, 2009).

The model proves that phenomena of any relative system (human's subjective environment, social environment, physical environment) are in permanent interaction with one another and the spiritual environment at large, therefore "according to Indian scholar Nagarjuna, they are dependent, i.e. arising but not inherently existing" (Dalai Lama, 2007).

The practical application of the model by university students was proven by teachers of the Sofia University and the Latvia University Agriculture (LUA).

The piloting procedure of the model with university students was carried out at

the faculties of Social Sciences and Engineering of the LUA.

Fifty bachelor students (42 women and 9 men) were interviewed by means of the questionnaire "Significance of Multi-dimensional Comprehension of Environment Discourse" to elucidate their opinion on the mentioned phenomenon.

Questions Nos. 1, 2, 4, 7 and 9 were analysed using the quantitative method of research. Respondents were encouraged to choose one of the answers: yes, partially, no (Figure 2.).

The analysis of the results showed that 90% of all respondents considered that environmental phenomena should be treated holistically, taking into consideration that the subjective, social, physical and spiritual environments interfere; 76% of recipients believed that there are features of human experience that could be universal to all races and cultures; 62% of students agreed with the viewpoint that the further development of the social environment of our civilization is based on cooperation

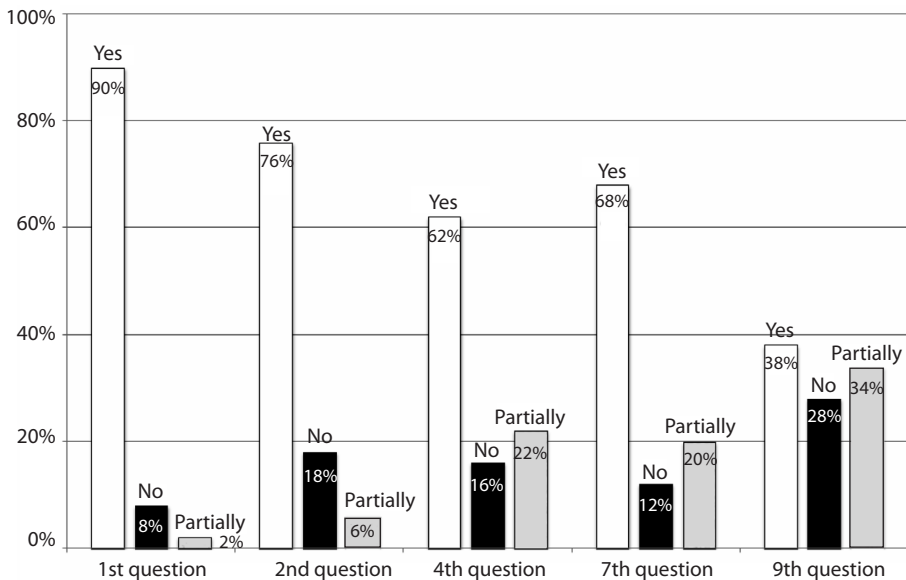


Figure 2. The frequency of categories yes, partially, no

but not competition among nations, companies and individuals; 68% of respondents agreed that a person is able to create a physical and social environment by means of his/her thought. Only 38% of all respondents completely believed and 34% partially agreed with the idea that virtual cross-cultural communication could foster the development of human's subjective world; 28% of students got an opposite viewpoint.

Answers to questions Nos. 3, 5, No. 6, 8, 10 were analysed by the qualitative method. Open-ended answers were categorized to semantic frequency of similar notions and then generalized, stating the strikingness inside the meaning of a definite structure; 96% of respondents considered that the universal values (love, compassion, altruism, tolerance, empathy) are significant (frequency of strikingness 0.96) to any subjective and social environmental system.

Examples:

These values are vital (3). Without these values people would be like simple animals (23). These values are important and play a huge role for any system (40).

However, two respondents thought differently. They considered that "these values are not especially important because the social environment forces us to think rationally in order to survive" (46, 50); 80% of respondents considered that the subjective world greatly influences the physical environment, the physical environment is created by the subjective world (frequency of strikingness 0.86). Examples: Our physical world is created by the subjective environment (6, 47, 36); we can influence the physical environment by our mind a lot (19); 90% of all respondents considered that the social environment shapes humans' behaviour (frequency of strikingness 0.90). Examples: People try to act in a way the social environment dictates (36). Society needs

and forms people who rely on the laws inside the social system (23).

At the same time, some respondents considered that “nowadays people think only about themselves, their own benefit” (7, 47).

Ninety-eight percent of all respondents supposed that there were some ways how to overcome cultural diversity problems in cross-cultural communication. It could be done through an *expanded knowledge and value system* (frequency of strikingness 0.98). Examples: Cultural diversity problems can be overcome by means of language knowledge, tolerance to foreign cultures and a positive way of thinking (12, 19, 35). People should change the way of thinking from negative to positive (27). Be not stereotyped (10, 5, 8). Pointing out the advantages and disadvantages of globalization, respondents mentioned rather many different phenomena; the positive ones could be grouped around the notion of *co-operation* and the negative ones around the notion of the *loss of national identity*.

Examples:

- To create something new together (35).
- To strive for the common goal – to solve the global problems (31).
- To do global business together (40). We become united – the EU (49).

Small nations are under the threat of losing their identity, they are perishing (36, 18, 19).

However, there are many other interesting examples: For instance: the use of the Internet makes people lazy (49); fetishism has greatly increased (50); brain drain can be observed (1, 2, 5). The results obtained in the practical research allowed the author to state that the hypothesis “global community will proceed to knowledge soci-

ety more effectively if it accepts holistic, multidimensional comprehension of environmental phenomenon for cross-cultural communication” was proven.

Discussion

The notion “environmental discourse” is widely used referring to different scientific domains: physical subjects and fields, interpersonal relationships, ecological niche, nature at large, etc. (Hardy, 1999).

Nowadays, the multidimensional environmental phenomena should not be treated separately from globalization processes which obviously influence all realms of the environment, including the subjective level of human’s consciousness (Stügers, 2008).

The mentioned postulates were proven by the results of this research: different environments interact.

Postmodern Western society, developing modern technologies and accumulating the material wealth, has forgotten the spiritual environment in which, to the author’s mind, any system exists, develops or degrades. Eastern scholars treat the nature of consciousness and body as the reciprocal processes in which the interactors depend upon each other, emerging and ceasing simultaneously. Thus, people need to free themselves from the traps of dualism, monism or any form of reductionism. The supreme scholars-practitioners of India, such as Nagarjuna, Aryadeva, Chandrakirti and Dharmakirti, have pointed out that the truth cannot be realized without seeing that we superimpose all people and things a status of solidity and permanence that actually is not there” (H. H. Dalai Lama, 2006). In order to develop the mentioned perception of universal processes we, Westerners,

have to comprehend the unilateralism of the dualistic interpretation of phenomena, “combining traditional reductionism with a holistic approach to the world outlook” (Siliņš, 1999). At the same time, Academician E. I. Siliņš has also mentioned that the science of postmodern society has come to the conviction of the existence of non-material, spiritual world which interacts with the material domain.

M. Steger, in his turn, has pointed out that Eastern cultures rely on a complementary comprehension of material and spiritual environments while Western humanists expand their theories on the basis of dualistic values which have led to the degradation of the global environment on its physical, social and even subjective levels (Stügers, 2008). He proves that our global community can reach the level of knowledge society and develop an effective cross-cultural communication only on the basis of eternal values common for everyone, exactly on love, compassion, empathy, tolerance, wisdom, etc. The data obtained in the practical part of this research confirmed the mentioned postulate.

Scientists of the LUA pay special attention to a new interdisciplinary trend of study – ecology of education, its research from the holistic perspective, taking into consideration the multidimensionality of this phenomenon and highlighting its role in the process of the development of knowledge society (Katane, 2009).

This proves that knowledge society could not be imagined without the holistic strategy of the management of environmental discourse or without virtual communication, especially across the borders.

The author of the article, nevertheless, is eager to point out that technical miracles

often foster the unfriendliness of humans’ collective psyche, determining discard among people, nations, and the environment at large (Laszlo, Currivan, 2008). Knowledge society cannot but evolve the intuitive-inductive way of thinking, fostering the wisdom mind which can open the door to the universal field of information, i.e. spiritual environment.

Conclusions

Practical research and analysis of scientific literature allowed the author of this study to conclude:

- the greatest part of respondents – bachelor students of the LUA – consider that the environmental phenomena should be treated holistically (this once again proves the value of practical application of the Model of Environment’s Holistic Interpretation);
- the majority of respondents share the viewpoint of common, universal human experience which is rooted in universal values such as love, compassion, tolerance, empathy, cooperation etc.;
- most of recipients have got a clear vision of how to overcome cultural diversity and communicate effectively across the borders.

The above conclusions can be transformed into a suggestion: terrestrial global community, striving to reach the level of knowledge society, ought to accept the holistic approach to managing the environmental discourse.

The author of this study leaves the research field open for further investigations on the application of environmental discourse for a better cross-cultural communication.

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APLĪNĶOS DISKURSO VALDYMAS ŽINIŲ VISUOMENĖJE

Margarita Putniņa

S a n t r a u k a

Šīame straipsnyje pateikiami bandomojo aplinkos holistinio suvokimo, kuris daro įtaką geresnei komunikacijai, tyrimo rezultatai.

Penkiasdešimt studentų iš dviejų LŽŪU fakultetų (Socialinių mokslų ir Inžinerinio) atliko mokslinius tyrimus. Aplinkos holistinio interpretavimo modelis (parengė bulgarų bei latvių mokslininkai) buvo pateiktas respondentams – universiteto dėstytojams. Studentai nustatė, kad aplinkos reiškinys turėtų būti traktu-

jamas holistiškai (dvasinės, subjektyvios, socialinės ir fizinės aplinkos sąveika). Respondentai taip pat patvirtino, kad egzistavo bendra patirtis, suformavusi amžinąsias vertybes meilės, užuojautos, tolerancijos, empatijos ir kt. visiems planetos gyventojams.

Tyrimas įrodė, kad šiandieną tiriant socialinius procesus globalioje visuomenėje būtų pritarta naudoti holistinį aplinkos valdymo metodą.