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As a result, the European intellectual tradition became the only one alive – either within, or outside the realm of social sciences (Kanth, 2005; Wallerstein, 2006; Chakrabarty, 2000; Kristensen *et al.*, 2000; Hall, 1992). One may talk about media and communication studies around the world, yet the discussion is essentially an intellectual monologue within the mainstream West – with itself. It is “conceptually impoverishing,” a “peculiarly restricted version of even Eurocentrism,” Downing (1996, p. xi) noted. As communication research preoccupies itself with the problem of hegemony, homogeneity, and the role of media in the distribution of power and influence in societies (Mansell, 2007, p. 283; Golding, 2005), turning away from the same issues within the field itself is no longer justifiable.

The twenty-first century is the era of plurality and multiculturalism, it is believed. The ascendancy of postmodernism, postcolonialism, and deconstructionism has finally brought academic attention to the periphery, minority, and subaltern. This is the time for decentralization, de-Westernization, differentiation and pluralist thinking; a trend of scholarly development that has finally addressed long-standing discontent with communication theories being “Western-centric” (Dissanayake, 1988; Goonasekera and Kuo, 2000; Curran and Park, 2000; Miike, 2003, 2007; Kim, 2007; Chen, 2006). While Eurocentrism is exposed, dissected, and critiqued under the rubrics of Orientalism (Said, 1979), European universality (Wallerstein, 2006), and historicism (Chakrabarty, 2000; Goody, 2006), greater effort has been made to look into the epistemological, ontological, and methodological differences between different cultural and intellectual traditions in terms of communication (Kim, 2002; Miike, 2007; Chen and Starosta, 2003). This has generated calls for a culture-specific, or the *emic*, approach which insists that individual attitudes and behaviors, institutional structures and social phenomena should be understood and analyzed within their cultural frameworks. Within this approach no methods of studying and theorizing will be structurally and systematically privileged against the others (Miike, 2003); generalities will be established on the basis of shared features among certain cultures (Chen and Starosta, 2003; Kim, 2002; Miike, 2002, 2003, 2004; Yum, 1988), and no longer presented as universal. In Asia, Chen (2006) has suggested that a direction for future Asian communication studies is emerging, and that culture-centricity – either Asiaticity or Afrocentricity – can be considered to be the solution to the problem (Miike, 2006; Asante, 1998).

According to Miike (2006), Afrocentricity and Asiaticity reflect a theoretical notion that proposes to locate cultural values and ideals at the heart of scholarly investigation:

Afrocentric [*italics in original*] approach . . . sees African phenomena from the perspective of Africans as subjects instead of objects. By the same token, . . . Asiatic approach . . . views Asian phenomena from the standpoint of Asians as subjects rather than objects . . . Asiatic studies in culture and communication propose and promote theoretical foundations whose concepts, comparisons, postulates, principles, and resources are rooted in, or derived from, the cumulative wisdom of diverse Asian cultural traditions.

(Miike, 2002, p. 231).

The renewed attention to Eurocentric biases and the new focus on culture-centricity in knowledge production is undoubtedly an important step to a more promising future. At the same time, the focus on culture-centricity has also brought more questions to the surface. The first one is, how should the “Western elements” in communication research be treated? Is there a need first to “de-Westernize” in order to cleanse of all biases and false claims?

In the literature there has been frequent mention, but little systematic discussion, of “de-Westernization” as a concept. Just as some of the other terms that begin with the prefix “de-,” de-Westernization as a dualistic opposition to Westernization suffers from a certain degree of ambiguity. Generally it seems to indicate “the removal of things that are ‘Western’,” but conceptually it says very little about which elements should be removed, let alone how to remove them. The question we faced seems to be twofold: first, is it necessary to de-Westernize, and second, is it possible to do so?

Chakrabarty (2000), in discussing the issue of provincializing Europe, has argued that the concepts related to political modernity are not only deeply ingrained/embedded in everyday habits of thought that subtend attempts in the social sciences, but have been indispensable in providing a foundation on which to critique socially unjust practices. “European thought . . . is both indispensable and inadequate in helping us to think through the various life practices that constitute the political and the historical in India” (Chakrabarty, 2000, p. 6). In addition, as the European intellectual tradition is the only one alive today, there is no alternative remaining; even terms that provide a basis for opposition, e.g., “Asia,” are European inventions.

Today few look at de-Westernization as a precondition to indigenizing communication research. The purpose of going beyond Eurocentrism is to enrich, rather than to deny and reject Western methods and theories (Goonasekera and Kuo, 2000; Miike, 2006), or their value and contribution. The issue that we face today, therefore, is no longer “whether” to de-Westernize, but “how to” take the next step. Yet what is left of the indigenization project without de-Westernization? As Alatas points out in Chapter 16 of this book, indigenization is an amorphous term, a “loose category” that has subsumed the works of many authors in a wide range of disciplines, all of whom are concerned with “the problem of irrelevancy and the generation of alternative scientific traditions.” Before further discussion can effectively take place then, the following questions must be tackled:

- What is the objective of our endeavor – is it to develop local perspectives and “home-grown theories” that reflect local needs and concerns? If it is, how can this be done, and how do we address the need for intellectual dialogue across discourse communities, and/or fragmentation of the field? (For more detailed discussion see Chapter 17.) How can we avoid cultural essentialism and the paradox of circumscribing “theory” – a concept that denotes universality – with “culture,” a descriptor that denotes specificity?
- Alternatively, if the objective is to build culture-general theories and paradigms, how do we do justice to the distinct differences among different intellectual

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traditions while continuing to search for generality and universality? Is universality at all possible under the circumstances?

- In view of the above, can we be certain that we now have a good grasp of the problem – and a realistic understanding of what it is, hence what can or cannot be achieved, given the prevailing distribution of opportunities and constraints?

Here we need a note of caution since advances have taken place at different speeds and to different extents across the various sub-disciplines of communication studies. For film analysts, problems with Western theories may have long been settled, but in other areas of media research, the “whether to de-Westernize” issue has barely attracted sufficient attention to bring about a debate.

Despite its distinct origins in the USA and Europe, the universalist approach to media studies has more frequently been taken for granted, even welcomed (Thussu, 2009, p. 15) than questioned or challenged. The literature on new production centers such as Bollywood and cultural/lingual cultural markets in Latin America, Asia and the Middle East (Thussu, 2007; Sinclair *et al.*, 1996; Sinclair, 2000; Tunstall, 2008) and the criticism of Western parochialism in media studies (Downing, 1996; Schudson, 1996; Curran and Park, 2000, p. 3) have yet to bring fundamental changes to the way media are conceptualized and analyzed. Although comparative research has become increasingly popular, there has been little sustained discussion of comparative methodology (Livingstone, 2003, p. 478). Meanwhile, comparative studies of media professionals and media systems, and transnational projects in areas such as political communication rarely go beyond the Euro-American ambit (Thussu, 2009, p. 17).

Some have attributed this persistent homogeneity in approaching media issues to the use of positivist methodologies, but the role and function prescribed to media at the time of their inception may be another important contributing factor. Regardless of the needs and values of societies in which media operate and prosper today, researchers have tended to see them as a means of information and entertainment, but most of all, as public fora for free expressions and/or instruments to exercise political and economic powers. It is from this perspective that they are examined and investigated, and very seldom have they been imagined as serving any other legitimate purposes. As this prescribed role and function of media is a close reflection of neo-liberalist and capitalist values of individual freedom, democracy, equality and consumerism, the Western parochialism of media studies, therefore, is but a function of the historical and socio-cultural context in which media themselves were born in the early twentieth century in Europe and America. The same context locked media studies into an effect-oriented paradigm, making all alternative models and practices seem deviant or underdeveloped. To view media as instrumental for social harmony, for example, would be regarded as nothing more than a variant of authoritarian ideology.

In contrast to the relative homogeneity in media theories, in intercultural communication where cultural clashes came out more clearly and the universal application of imported models and theories is more problematic, the issues of indigenization and localization have received greater attention. Researchers were

prompted to systematically explore deep-seated cultural differences not just in communication behaviors, but also in ways to approach issues in communication (Kim, 2002; Miike, 2004, 2009; Gunaratne, 2005). Out of this, an Asian communication paradigm is emerging after years of discussion (Chen, 2006) and this is seen as a critical moment for self-examination.

In film and area studies, and to a large extent, in cultural studies, indigenization is considered a concern that after some twenty years of debate on cross-cultural reading, has been worked through. As Yeh notes in Chapter 8 of this book, researchers engaged in comparative and area studies have come face to face with issues of power relations between theory and text, and methods and meaning, and between West and East on the basis of works by postcolonial scholars and cultural theorists such as Jameson (1986), Foucault (1980) and Bhabha (1983). Through retooling cross-cultural analysis as a project of cultural exchange (Kaplan, 1991) and reconstituting the East and West relationship to come to terms with Asian subjectivity, the hostility towards Western theories has become marginalized.

The different inroads that communication researchers have made in indigenizing their works indicate that there can be no uniform questions and answers for all. They also indicate a lack of communication across – in some cases, even within – areas of study regarding these issues. Overall it is difficult to deny that, until this moment, there has not been the same kind of vigor and richness in “internationalizing communication research” as there has been in some other fields of social scientific research, such as psychology (Brock, 2006; Lawson *et al.*, 2007). There is an urgent need for communication within the research community, but also for new ideas about possible approaches, directions and paradigms that may shed light on the future prospects of development. On the other hand, any proposals of such a nature face hurdles that may drag them down, including pitfalls and dead ends associated with the uses of the culture-specific approach to indigenizing communication research. These hurdles include:

1. The pitfall of repeating the mistakes of Western fundamentalism and Orientalism. Mignolo (2007, p. 383), for example, criticized the attempt of Meera Nanda, an Indian scientist, to call for the legitimacy of Vedic knowledge available through ancient Indian texts as “scientific”; Nanda was playing “right into the hands of Western fundamentalism, replicating by changing its content but not its logic,” he charged. Wallerstein (2006, p. 46) referred to propositions such as Nanda’s “avatars of Orientalism,” arguments to show that European’s presumed achievements were the common aspirations of civilizations, rather than specific to Europe.
2. The pitfall of nativism and cultural essentialism. As Dissanayake (2003) and Khiabany (2010) warned, there is the inherent danger for culture-centrists to become romantic and indulge in essentialism and exoticism as they explore culture-specific approaches to media and communication studies. While it is not impossible to define what is “quintessentially Asian” about the communication of Asians, reliance on culture as a unit of analysis runs the risk of overgeneralizing commonalities and overlooking within-culture differences

(Chen and Starosta, 2003). As the concept of culture, by nature, implies openness and diversity within, a narrower focus, e.g., China or Islam, does not solve the problem.

3. The risk of becoming instrumental to capitalist motives. As Foucault (1980) and Hall (1992, pp. 294–5) pointed out, the discourse West has developed in talking about the Rest cannot operate outside of power; science is not entirely ideologically innocent, and the discourse was influenced by the play of motives and interests. Such an observation is not, of course, groundless. The sudden surge of interest in relations (*guanxi*) in Chinese organizations in the 1980s is closely linked to Western investors' frustration in dealing with the country's bureaucratic system as they scramble to take advantage of the opening of its market. Indigenization of social scientific research, in such cases, is no more than a Trojan horse to help capitalists penetrate local markets (Dirlik, 2001).

Each of the three warnings points to a problem that has already surfaced with the current level of indigenization in communication and social scientific research. The first one against "avatars of Orientalism" indicates a haste to connect the indigenous and the mainstream literature, glossing over the differences deep down in values and world-views. It represents a premature culture-general approach – an attempt to establish generality and universality before the particular was fully explored, duly recognized and taken into consideration. The second one on nativism points to an overemphasis on the unique, the different, and often the traditional. It leads to a tendency to see historical processes as frozen in time, overlooking the dynamic nature of cultures, and the changes that have taken place over time (Dissanayake, 2003) due to, for example, modernization. It not only sets a given particular apart from the other particulars, but also undercuts the possibility of making comparisons, of establishing intellectual dialogue, and of developing generality. The last one, on the other hand, represents a lack of ownership of research questions and perspectives when those with economic and political powers take the lead in determining what and how to research about the Self, while it should have been the Self that decides what is the most significant and needed topic from a local perspective.

These pitfalls throw into even sharper relief the question of how to proceed without repeating the same mistakes. On the other hand, it is also important not to be intimidated or limited by the traps and obstacles. At times it is necessary also to question whether some of the criticisms themselves are products of Eurocentric mode of thinking. Goody (2006, p. 5), for example, has warned that a hidden ethnocentric risk is "to be Eurocentric about ethnocentricity," a trap that postcolonialism and postmodernism frequently fall into. The tendency to frame different concepts in a dualistic binary set also runs the risk of premature closure for further reflections and investigation, and the possibility of developing a perspective on the basis of a different world-view. As the endeavor to reflect and tackle many of the issues surrounding indigenization has barely taken off in the field as a whole, it is important, at this stage, to be free, open, and bold in making observations and