



INTERNATIONAL
STANDARD
SERIAL
NUMBER
INDIA

2395-2636 (Print):2321-3108 (online)

CROSS CULTURAL COMMUNICATION-METHODS & CHALLENGES

Dr. ANJUL SHARMA¹, Dr. PURNIMA PANDEY²

¹Assistant Professor, IMS Engineering College, Ghaziabad

²Assistant Professor, (IMS Engineering College, Ghaziabad

DOI: [10.33329/rjelal.12.1.82](https://doi.org/10.33329/rjelal.12.1.82)



Article info

Article Received:17/01/2024

Article Accepted: 16/02/2024

Published online:21/02/2024

Abstract

Cross-cultural communication is the study of how individuals from various cultural backgrounds interact with one another in similar and distinct ways, as well as how they attempt to communicate multi-ethnically. Cross-cultural communication is critical for businesses with a varied staff and take part in the global economy. It is equally critical for employees to recognize the components of a productive, diverse staff. This cultural mode of communication attempts to bring disparate locations together such as cultural structuralism, and it provides a communication zone. Its primary concept is to implant, ingrained and comprehend how people from many cultural backgrounds pass on information with one another. It also intends to produce some guidelines that individuals from Different cultures can converse more effectively with one another. The following article discusses successful cross-cultural communication methods, challenges encountered in intercultural communication, and methods for resolving cross-cultural communication concerns.

Keywords- Cross-Cultural, Communication, Business, Diversity, Language

Culture is an approach of thinking and behaving that involves learning and adopting a set of attitudes, values, norms, and beliefs from other group members. This shared system of fundamental presumptions and worldly solutions is passed down from generation to generation in order to secure survival. Unwritten and written rules and laws that govern how people interact with one another make up a culture. People who belong to a culture might be recognized by the similarities they have. They might share a common region, race, or ethnicity.

CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION

Inter-cultural communication is the exchange of ideas among individuals who are different from one another in any of the following

ways: age, nationality, ethnicity, race, gender, sexual orientation, etc. The term "cross-cultural communication" can also be used to describe efforts taken to discuss, compromise, and mediate cultural differences through language, gestures, and body language. It is how individuals from many cultures interact with one another.

Everybody has the ability to practise culture to varied degrees. There are various cultures in which one participates actively or gradually distances themselves, in addition to the culture of the community in which they are raised. An individual is perpetually forced to choose between his native culture and the dominant culture to which he is exposed. Conflicts between cultures arise when people think their culture is superior to another¹.

When two people from different cultures interact, they not only come from distinct cultural backgrounds, but also have various turn-taking practices. If both speakers are aware of the turn-taking procedure being utilized in the conversation, cross-cultural communication will be more successful and simpler (For example: One person should not monopolize the conversation or only one person should talk at a time).

Due to the expansion of international trade, technology, and the Internet, cross-cultural communication has acquired strategic importance for businesses. Any organization that employs a varied staff or intends to conduct international commerce has to have a solid understanding of cross-cultural communication. Understanding how individuals from various cultures talk, interact, and view the world is necessary for this kind of communication. In an organization, cross-cultural communication involves comprehending various business practices, ideologies, and communication techniques.

ORIGINS AND CULTURE

The world was split into two distinct and rival powers during the cold war, the east and the West, so the US economy was primarily self-contained during that time. On the other hand, conventional cultural barriers started to fall down as a result of developments in political institutions, technical alternatives, and economic ties. In the world of business, national capitalism gave way to international capitalism. Accordingly, as business and government sought to expand overseas, the study of cross-cultural communication got its start. Companies started training employees in new languages, and initiatives were developed to teach staff members appropriate behavior when traveling abroad.

KEY BARRIERS OR CHALLENGES FOR CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATIONS:

ETHNOCENTRISM

We are all prone to viewing other cultures through our own perspectives. Ethnocentrism occurs when we implicitly assume that our way of doing and viewing things is the only way. As a result,

we judge behaviors that do not adhere to our worldview negatively. We see strange and inappropriate behavior in others. Ethnocentrism also fosters a "us versus them" mentality, which can be harmful. I used to work for a company where the French would complain about the Americans in an ethnocentric fashion, and vice versa.

STEREOTYPING

Relying on oversimplified stereotypes about individuals from diverse cultures is another prevalent practice. Actually, there are a lot of cross-cultural training programs available that promote stereotyping by emphasizing memorization of cultural differences. Acquiring knowledge about distinctions can serve as a beneficial foundation. However, people are all different, and you can never tell how someone will behave just because of their nationality. French friends informed us that although dinner is a common social gathering in France, the British never invite you to dinner. This was true when we were moving to the UK. Our delightful British neighbors frequently extend dinner invitations to us.

PSYCHOLOGICAL BARRIERS

You must be willing to adapt in order to successfully manage cross-cultural teams. Opting out of your natural preferences is not easy. People may feel inept and lacking in authenticity. I am aware of the situation involving the French manager who traveled to the US. He discovered that his team's confidence was being undermined by his typical French feedback style, which centered on what was "wrong" rather than what was working well. Even though he knew what was wrong, he didn't feel natural acting in a "American" manner. He returned to France without delay.

GEOGRAPHICAL DISTANCE

People in international virtual teams don't have the same opportunities to socialize and form bonds with one another as they would in an office setting. Additionally, you share less information with people the less you understand about them. As a result, working together in virtual teams is harder. Apart from the headquarters, groups may also experience exclusion. However, those in the head

office group may believe that their colleagues are not making a contribution. Time zone differences can also be difficult. You're frequently expected to put up with less convenient meeting times if you're not in the headquarters. I know of one exceptionally gifted woman who quit her senior leadership position globally because she could no longer stand to meet late into the night.

HIGH VS LOW CONTEXT CULTURE

High- and low-context culture refers to how an employee's views, opinions, feelings, and upbringing influence how they perform within a specific culture. North America and Western Europe are widely regarded as having low-context cultures. This implies that companies in these areas have direct, individualistic personnel who make judgments based on facts. This sort of business person requires specificity in contracts and may have trust concerns.

Trust is the most critical aspect of commercial interactions in high-context societies. There are several regions in the Middle East, Asia, and Africa that may be classified as high context. High-context cultures are collectivist and place a premium on interpersonal ties. Individuals from high-context cultures may be interested in learning more about the individual with whom they are doing business in order to obtain a gut feeling about a choice. They may also be more interested with corporate teams and collective accomplishment than with individual success.

NON-VERBAL DIFFERENCES

Gestures and eye contact are two types of nonverbal communication that differ between cultures. Companies must teach personnel in the proper handling of nonverbal communication in order to avoid offending different cultures. When offering nonverbal guidance, American employees, for example, tend to wave their hand and point with their finger. Extreme gesticulation is considered impolite in certain cultures.

While pointing may be okay in some situations in the United States, using a finger to point at another person is considered impolite in Japan. Instead, he may make a gesture towards the

individual with an open hand, palm up. Nonverbal communication is found in our gestures and may be divided into following categories:

Emblems: Allude to sign language (such as the thumbs up, which is one of the most recognized symbols in the world).

Illustrators: Illustrators replicate what is spoken (for example, putting up a given number of fingers to indicate how much time is left). Regulators operate as a means of transmitting meaning by gestures (raising one's hand, for example, indicating that one has a question regarding what was just spoken).

Affect manifestations: Affect displays show feelings such as happiness (through a grin) or grief (by quivering lips and tears).

LANGUAGE DIFFERENCES

The most challenging aspect of cross-cultural communication is the challenge imposed by language obstacles. A person who does not speak Japanese, for example, is apprehensive about his capacity to communicate successfully with another. He can utilize several tactics to assist him create rapport with another individual. He can communicate without using words by using emotions, facial expressions, and other nonverbal indicators. He can also doodle and request an interpreter.

The language barrier is a significant barrier in intercultural communication between patients and health professionals about sexual health. According to research, patients from different cultures and immigrants frequently lack basic or everyday language command while speaking with doctors and nurses in the local language. Patients may be bashful while speaking a language other than their mother tongue, which makes it difficult for them to obtain sexual health information.

METHODS & SKILLS FOR CROSS CULTURAL DIVERSITY

While interacting, take time to organize your thoughts. Allow time for those who do not speak your native language to understand what you are saying.

Speak with clarity and succinctly. Maintain direct eye contact and speak in easy and simple language with conviction and assurance. Abstain from using phrases with cryptic or contradictory meanings. One of the most difficult problems that non-native English-speaking cultures face with the English language is misinterpreting the several meanings that a single word can have.

Keep things simple, easy and straightforward. Consider your audiences and listeners and speak to their level of understanding and adjust your tone accordingly. Don't give lengthy protracted and boring speeches to your audience. Give your audience enough time to absorb what you've said. Pay attention to your audience and participate in both listening and speaking. A group's reaction to your statements may show their comprehension of your speech. ☒

Maintain politeness and respect for people of other cultures. Respecting the people with whom you communicate minimizes the tension they feel when trying to understand what you're saying. Preliminary research on specific strategies for connecting with the cultures with which you will be in contact is a fantastic way to display your admiration for your multi-cultural group. ☒

Be open and compassionate. You can reassure listeners by expressing your respect and consent—or lack thereof—through your body language. Your non-verbal cues communicate things you may not say. Steer clear of expressive hand gestures, since they might be intimidating to others who misread your intentions. Crossing your arms conveys the message that you are uninterested in what others have to say.

Slang should be avoided. Slang phrases are specific to the setting and are not usually translated correctly. Avoid employing slang jargon that others may not understand in order to accomplish effective cross-cultural communication. ☒

Humour should be avoided. What one culture finds hilarious may not be so in another. Humour may be misinterpreted and interpreted badly. While comedy is an excellent icebreaker, it might backfire if the cross-cultural group fails to

recognise its intended function. Avoid using humour whenever feasible while interacting with people from other cultures.

Adopt a formal approach to interacting until you've established a rapport with your group. People from different cultures may be insulted by your casual, informal demeanor, especially if you have only recently met them. Until you have built a connection with your cross-cultural group, maintain a respectful and formal tone of speech.

Do not pose or answer any negative queries or comments or in other words refrain from asking or responding with negative questions or responses. Double negatives confuse people who speak English as their first language already. Misunderstandings of double negatives are common in cross-cultural settings.

To ensure that everyone understands, keep your questions and responses basic. Ask for comments. Encourage the intercultural group members to interact and pose questions. Encouraging two-way communication reduces miscommunication and provides answers to questions. Recap the points you made. Never assume that someone understands something just because you say it. Rephrase what you've said, give them a recap, and give them some time to process it. You can ensure that everyone is in agreement by summarizing what you have said.

TIPS TO IMPROVE YOUR CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Know yourself: To effectively communicate across cultures, one needs to be conscious of their own traits and behavioral patterns. Everybody has a distinct culture of our own. People's identities in North America are often dominated by the "I." Relationship dissolution is primarily caused by the "me" culture. When two aspects of a culture collide, defensive behavior usually follows. Knowing your specific triggers will help you communicate more effectively with people from different cultural backgrounds. If you can recognize your emotions, you can manage them. If not, you might try forcing your morals on someone else.

Be Aware of Personal Space Variations: One major issue with communication is personal space. When someone enters your personal space, you may lose consciousness and tune out, which can lead to miscommunication. In Canada, one arm is the approximate length of our individual "bubble," measured from elbow to finger. However, in many other countries, personal space is much more restricted. When speaking with someone from a different culture, be aware of your emotions when they enter your bubble so you can deal with it and move on. Realize that the other person's "affront" to your personal space was simply something they were used to; it wasn't intentional

Don't be afraid of conversational pauses Every language has a unique cadence. It usually takes a generation to master this, making it one of the most difficult language skills to pick up. While they are common in many other cultures, large pauses are uncommon in Canadian cadence. In fact, answering without giving it some thought is regarded as impolite and inconsiderate. This idea is especially important when conducting interviews with candidates from diverse cultural backgrounds. Recall that when someone stops, it's more likely that they are used to considering things through before responding than that they are ignorant of the solution.

Keep your eyes on the prize: Developing cross-cultural relationships is a strategy to increase productivity when you work with people from different countries and have clients from over eighteen.

Recognize the culture you possess: Remember that your own experiences, history, culture, etc., greatly distort your perception of reality.

Manage your attitudes towards the culture: Control your opinions about the culture; you don't have to love it. But you have to be careful about how you react to people who don't share your values and lifestyle. You may also be able to control your attitudes with the help of the first two rules.

Direct your learning of the culture: Although personal experience is the best way to understand a culture, books and training sessions can also be

beneficial. Make use of your existing knowledge and take the initiative to learn more about the cultures you come into contact with on a daily basis at work.

Learn about the new culture efficiently: Effectively familiarize yourself with the new culture: It is impossible for you to know everything about the culture before your visit, conversation, or meeting. It's not plausible. Focus on picking up a few topics related to your interests when you are on the road, at a meeting, or on the phone so that you can network and learn more.

Adapt to cultural shocks: Regardless of how well you prepare, you will come across individuals whose behavior baffles you. If so, try to figure out why. Doing so will often lead to new insights. At all costs, reactionary behavior needs to be avoided.

Consider things from a cultural angle: Take on a cultural perspective and try to see things from the perspective of people from the other culture. By taking a cultural viewpoint, you might gain an entirely new understanding of what's going on in your surroundings. I have discovered that there are two ways I can empathize with cultures I have not encountered: watching documentaries about the culture of the country and deliberately trying to put myself in their position.

Arrange for intercultural communication: Think about what you will say and how you want the other person to perceive you before engaging in cross-cultural communication. Your understanding of the local culture will help you decide how best to communicate.

Retain composure when it comes to your appearance: Pay close attention to how you speak and present yourself. You can sometimes be more productive when you're properly dressed yourself. Other times, you have to change how you present yourself to the society

Think about it and seek guidance: Once interactions and events occur, continue to reflect on them and draw lessons from them. You may consider whether your intended messages were understood after a conversation. You could even ask someone who lives there how well you did.

The difficulties associated with international communication have increased as business has looked more and more to a global market that is integrated to meet its needs. Due to ethnocentrism and ignorance of culturally based assumptions that are mistakenly believed to be universal, conflict between people of different cultural orientations can easily arise. This could potentially occur at home. Cultural diversity in the workplace is a product of our "melting pot" society and the country's expanding immigrant population. The focus on global markets and an interconnected, internationalized economy has increased the significance of overcoming cultural gaps and barriers to cross-cultural communication. Small business owners and representatives face a sometimes-bewildering array of communication considerations when deciding to enter the global market. Nonetheless, by taking these three actions, most of these problems can be satisfactorily resolved: 1) Respecting everyone you come into contact with; 2) Pausing before speaking; and 3) Researching appropriate business conduct, cultural and customer sensitivities, current affairs, and relevant historical events.

CONCLUSION

We might promote our businesses in new markets that the Internet and modern technology have opened up. Additionally, cross-cultural communication is growing more and more prevalent as working remotely and interacting with individuals face-to-face may now be equally easy. After all, working with someone across town or in another country is just as easy if communication is electronic. And when you can work just as easily with the smartest individuals on the planet as you can with those who live a short drive away, why limit yourself to working with them? Luckily for those of us who are natural English speakers, English seems to be the language that people utilize to communicate with as many people as possible. Nevertheless, even for English native speakers, communicating between cultures can be difficult: Just take note of the odd miscommunication that may occur between people who speak different languages. In this new setting, effective cross-cultural communication is crucial.

References

- [1]. Alred, G. J., Ollivier, W. E., & Brusaw, C. T. (2018). *The Handbook of Technical Writing* (Twelfth ed.). Bedford/St. Martin's.
- [2]. Gudykunst, W. B. (2012). *Bridging Differences: Effective Intergroup Communication (Interpersonal Contexts 5)* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications, Inc.
- [3]. Okoro, E. (2012). *Cross-Cultural Etiquette and Communication in Global Business: Towards a Strategic Framework for Managing Corporate Expansion*. *International Journal of Business and Management*, 1-9.
- [4]. Laroche, L. (2012). *Managing Cultural Diversity in Technical Professions*. Taylor & Francis.
- [5]. Markel, M., & Selber, S. (2017). *Technical Communication* (12th ed.). Bedford/St. Martin's.
- [6]. Pellerin, C. J. (2009). *How NASA Builds Teams: Mission Critical Soft Skills for Scientists, Engineers, and Project Teams* (1st ed.). Wiley.
- [7]. Robbins, S., & Judge, T. (2017). *Essentials of Organizational Behavior* (14th ed.). Pearson.
- [8]. A. (2013, March 22). *Global Etiquette. Cultural Tips to Keep in Mind for Any Culture!* *CirclesofExcellence*. <https://www.circlesofexcellence.com/blog/2013/03/global-etiquette-cultural-tips-to-keep-in-mind-for-any-culture/>
- [9]. B, Anoop. (2019, March 28). *The Need for Design Thinking in Communications*. *Market Express*. <http://www.marketexpress.in/2019/03/the-need-for-design-thinking-in-communications.html>
- [10]. *Cultural stereotypes lead to misunderstandings*. (2019, April 9). *Country Navigator*. <https://countrynavigator.com/blog/cultural-intelligence/cultural-stereotypes/>
- [11]. *Culture Is Communication and Communication Is Culture* | Bartleby. (2017, May 23). *Bartleby Research*. <https://www.bartleby.com/essay/Culture-Is-Communication-and-Communication-Is-Culture-FKMNSSXHKGEZ>
- [12]. Gracie, John Lopez. (2016, May 9). *The Importance of Cross Cultural Training*.

- Linkedin.<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/importance-cross-cultural-training>
- [13]. Jenifer R. Delecta (2015), "Cross Culture Communication Barriers In Workplace". ICAM, 333-334
- [14]. Zhou, Y. (2008). The Impact of Cultural Transfer on Cross-Cultural Communication. Asian Social Science , 142-146
- [15]. Morad, N. (2018, June 15). How to Use Psychology to Communicate Better and Avoid Conflict.Medium.<https://medium.com/@NataliMorad/how-to-communicate-better-with-transactional-analysis-d0d32f9d50da>