CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION

Abstract

In an era characterized by unprecedent globalization, the ability to communicate across the cultures has become an essential skill for an individual, organization, and societies. This chapter delves in to the intricate landscape of cross-cultural communication, exploring the challenges, opportunities and strategies involved in to improvise diverse cultural contexts. The chapter begins with the fundamental concept that underpin cross-cultural communication, such as importance and basic elements of cross-cultural communication, The developmental theory and barriers of cross-cultural communication.

A significant portion is dedicated to the impact of cultural differences on verbal and non-verbal communication, emphasizing the role of language, gestures, and body language in shaping intercultural interactions, it also includes the 'Developmental model of Intercultural Sensitivity'. By- Bennett which explains us the concept of 'Ethnocentrisms and Ethnorelativism', which confer about one's own culture as 'central to reality' and one's own belief. Drawing on real world examples and case studies, the chapter illustrates how misinterpretations can arise and provides insights into fostering mutual understanding.

Furthermore, the chapter explore about the importance of cultural sensitivity and awareness is a recurring theme throughout the chapter, emphasizing the need for individuals to develop intercultural competence. Strategies for building cultural competence are explored through immersive experience and continuous learning activities.

In conclusion, this chapter underscores the significance of effective cross-cultural communication in fostering

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Article details:
Published in: IIP Series
Volume: 3 | Year: 2023
ISSN: 3070-7617 (Online)
DOI: https://www.doi.org/10.58532/V3BKSO9P1CH1
Publisher: Iterative International Publishers (IIP)

Cite this:
Toyesha Thakur, CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION, In: Futuristic Trends in Social Sciences V3B9, IIP Series, Volume 3, May, 2023, pp. 1-10, Iterative International Publishers IIP, E-ISBN: 978-93-5747-378-1, DOI: https://www.doi.org/10.58532/V3BKSO9P1CH1

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positive relationship, reducing conflicts, and promoting collaboration in an increasingly interconnected world. By understanding and appreciating the richness of cultural diversity, individuals and organizations can harness the power of cross-cultural communication to thrive in the global landscape.

Keywords: Cross-cultural communication, Diversities, Learning, Interaction.

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Cross-cultural communication is an impactful interaction and transmission of messages with people from different cultures and diversities.

Learning Objectives

- Understanding the concept of cross-cultural communication.
- Understanding the importance of cross-cultural communication.
- Grasping the stages of cross-cultural communication.
- Learning about cross-cultural communication at the workplace.

I. INTRODUCTION

Cross-cultural Theory involves exploring people all around the world based on their ethnicities, culture, and demography therefore making it possible for them to overcome all the barriers and work together. As it is said' Consistency is the key' Here people should regularly work on verbal and non-verbal communication and understand the best way to convey ideas across cultural divides.

With the continued growth in the globalization of the economy, cross-cultural communication recently played a vital role in multinational companies, and years ahead the definition given is direct but implementing, cross-cultural communication is not as black and white thus prioritizing diversity while hiring has become a trend.

1. **Importance of Cross-Cultural Communication:** Companies that are multinational and appoints employees from diversities focuses on cross-cultural communication and regulate various program to inculcate better communication skill in their employees to create a positive and flexible working environment, thus Having good communication skill fosters good relationship, eliminates miscommunication, grows a sense of respect with the employees from diverse backgrounds.

   To fuel the business growth and uncover opportunities cultural communication plays a prominent role, e.g. Employees who are reared in different cultural backgrounds and age groups can have different aspects and notions about their generations when it comes to customer handling Their insights will be unique because they will be having and open mind and distinct approaches they have learned for the accomplishment of goals from their cultures which would generally help company to fuel growth across the market and fuel growth across the markets, improve engagements towards employees and reduce churn. Getting yourself worked with cross-cultural communication will enable free exchange of information and it will empower everyone to be profited by the flow of valuable data.

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2. Basic Elements of Cross-Cultural Communication

- **Consciousness:** Cultures are deeply ingrained in the fabric of society from the way to cook food to the way we do business, Culture creates a sense of belonging that we truly are connected and to manage this we need to be conscious and aware we must understand that countries have different way and time zones of functioning. The generalized way we follow is not accurate universally to accomplish a task, for instance, people from different cultures evolve over the years and adopt and accept the other culture and evolve over years thus adopted and accepted other cultures Similarly it takes effort and patience to understand what drives the person or an organization you are working under.

- **Prepare:** Being prepared before any encounter is the base of communication before muting your non-native colleague it would be humbler to read about their country and culture. Simple actions like how to greet them and rest are culturally determined, Some countries are comfortable with the idea of proximity but in some, they may take it as an offensive action, One should not focus on perfecting etiquette though it might show that you are desperate to establish good communication which is not accurate. The fact that you have done the research and trying to do the right things in terms of communicating right enough to show people around you that you carry pure respect and care for them.

- **Language:** People usually come from different backgrounds and can manage to speak entirely different languages because the primary expression of any culture is language expression as soon as a person speaks, they will be able to identify their geographical region and social subgroups. When you and your counterpart speak different languages in that case you both must know one common language which is spoken all over. For example, you speak Hindi but another one is fluent in Kanada thus you can use the English language as a common medium of communication. One word in language X may mean positive in one language but the same word in language Y might have a different meaning thus in such cases you must try and avoid misunderstanding and clarify with the speaker at the moment.

- **Temperament:** One should be extremely careful with the behavioral aspect of your colleague especially the humor part, in many cultures it is not acceptable to crack jokes in terms of business as it is said that Jokes don’t translate for instance sarcasm is

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the basic ingredient to the people of United States but only when it is cracked funnily natives of other countries might take it as an insult or an emotional attack.

Most of all prohibit jokes and humor at the beginning of your conversation, Make sure that you make the speaker comfortable to communicate and once he/she is in that comfort zone you can light up the humor in the room as humor is loved by all.

- **Neutral:** More commonly to be said receiving you are directly connecting to the vulnerability of a human being because they can easily relate to their ethnicities. Nervousness is again another factor that people fear but there is no weakness in accepting the nervousness People tend to overpower fear because they do not want to mess up. To overcome dreadfulness, it is always necessary to ask for feedback, Your peers would give your counterpart and help you gain opportunities along the way most of all they will easily be able to connect with you.

The insights you will get from diversified employees around will help you to solve many puzzles in the workplace and may assist you towards better execution of the task. E.g. Your nationality is Indian and you have the same cultural references as your fellow Indian colleagues but you may feel comfortable with the English way of doing business Hurdles can come over only if we can use both languages compatibly i.e., verbal and non-verbal and indeed focus on the connection with the employee on emotional grounds too.

3. Attributes of Quality Cross-Cultural Communication.

- **Clarity and Candor:** Functioning becomes more meaningful when it is done unambiguously especially when it comes to communicating cross-culturally one has to be clear and candor. Uncertain and Judgmental communication creates toxicity among people from another demesne, thus it becomes challenging for the person to show up what he/she desires and deliver their best services to the firm, while communicating sincerity, frankness, and clarity should be given priority.

- **Cultivate:** Appointed employees generally have a growth mindset and are goal-oriented they have an appetite for development, stagnancy is out of trend and they want more than just paychecks, Optimistic employees tend to involve themselves with employees who carry cultivating a mindset, interact with such employees accurately will help an individual to learn diversified work ethics which would lead him or her to an overachiever, therefore communicating with the ideology of growth would always lead to an excellent operational organization.

- **Collaboration:** Humans propagate on working together in groups or teams as we can see evidently that humans are social beings and their very own existence on serving and being dependent on each other. Unity is the major pillar of any form of communication thus it helps foster comradeship among the employees and boosts their morale and performance for the firm. Collaboration in the context of cultural communication plays a prominent role in making the process of communication complete.

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Futuristic Trends in Social Sciences
e-ISBN: 978-93-5747-378-1
IIP Series, Volume 3, Book 9, Part 1 ,Chapter 1
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- **Consideration:** While communicating cross-culturally it is essential to understand that whatever you are trying to convey to your colleague from a distinct culture can decode the message, meaning the message you are conveying is in context to your colleague's understanding or not, the delivery should be empathetic putting yourself in someone else's shoe and being aware of their emotions, attitudes, ideas, desires situations and probable reaction top your particulars. Handle the communication from their point of view make them the universe of your conversation make them believe that whatever you are communicating to the other party their feedback is essential to complete the process of communication.

- **Core Values:** Creating a sense of purpose has to be a core value of communication cross-culturally, to have a sustainable environment amongst colleagues one must reflect purpose while communicating with one another keeping a sense of respect towards associates' ethnicities, and diversity. The values should be woven with the process of communication because it is the base of the connection with the people you are working with and the company, practicing values should be the utmost priority as this generation dwells on consistency and it can make you a better communicator on must not lose the purpose of communication.

4. **Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity:** Benette formed a scale to explain cross-cultural communication and sensitivity towards it he coined a developmental model on Intercultural sensitivity hence having a dire connection to cross-cultural handling We can consider his developmental model for understanding the sensitivity of cross-cultural communication, it is one of the most influential models when it comes to intercultural communication, engagement, and equity the model describes the typical ways in which people interact interpret and experience cultural differences he also developed understanding towards the progression towards communicating interculturally.

   According to Bennett, "As one's perceptual organization of cultural difference becomes more complex, one's experience of culture becomes more sophisticated and the potential for exercising competence in intercultural relations increases. By recognizing how cultural difference is being experienced, predictions about the effectiveness of intercultural communication can be made and educational interventions can be tailored to facilitate development along the continuum."

   The continuum describes two distinct orientations towards cultural differences: Ethnocentrism and Ethnorelativism.

   In 2004, Bennett explained the development of the terms: "As people became more interculturally competent it seemed that there was a major change in the quality of their experience, which I called the move from *ethnocentrism* to *ethnorelativism*. I used the term 'ethnocentrism' to refer to the experience of one's own culture as 'central to reality.' By this I mean that the beliefs and behaviors that people receive in their primary socialization are unquestioned; they are experienced as 'just the way things are.' I coined the term 'ethnorelativism' to mean the opposite of ethnocentrism—the experience of one's own beliefs and behaviors as just one organization of reality among many viable possibilities…. In general, the more ethnocentric orientations can be seen as ways of *avoiding cultural difference*, either

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by denying its existence, by raising defenses against it, or by minimizing its importance. The more ethnorelative worldviews are ways of *seeking cultural difference*, either by accepting its importance, by adapting perspective to take it into account, or by integrating the whole concept into a definition of identity."

- **Denial:** Denial in cross-cultural communication occurs when peers fail to understand that differences exist and that can be consequential when they perceive people from different cultures in self-serving ways. People who are in the self-declining stage would address people from other cultures vaguely and homogamically such as, 'Immigrants', 'Foreigners', 'Asians', etc. or they will demean stereotypically assuming the different traits people of other cultures are carrying the result of lack of physical ability, intelligence, and work ethics or other innate traits.

- **Defense:** Defense happens when people want to protect their origin, so their perception of other cultures is competitive and polarizing e.g., sensitivity for immigrants coming to their country to co-exist but perceived by natives as they are taking over their jobs and get triggered by the feeling their traditional values will be hampered sometimes employees exalt their own culture over other cultures, even if communication is concrete they feel offended and victimized in the discussions happening e.g. Leaving the room while discussing the sentimental aspects of the culture, therefore, discussing it should be prohibited in any case and affirmative communication should be practiced interculturally.

- **Minimization:** Minimization of cultural differences occurs when distinct culture worldwide is shared by others and taken as the sense of neglect and disregard towards the importance of culture e.g., race or gender biases in the workplace. Minimization may manifest in arguments that human similarities are more crucial than cultural differences it enables people to understand all humans are alike and they recognize fellow humans around.

- **Acceptance:** The process of embracing emotions thoughts and feelings with internal awareness without any judgment or change and cultural differences are quite obvious and acceptance can make anyone realize that there are different beliefs and value systems shaped by the culture there are legitimate behavioral patterns that cause

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greater curiosity for fellow humans to get knowledge of other culture and then people seek out to work on cross-cultural relationships and social interactions that were avoided in the past. Like in academics, one should focus on delivering the best regardless of concentrating on which race, caste, or nationality they are teaching.

Benette tries to deliver that acceptance does not endorse the values or behavior of other cultures it means accepting the distinctive existence of cultures worldwide, ideologies shape human behaviors values, and beliefs, and promising the fact that measurement of behavioral aspects is derived and determined culturally.

- **Adaptation:** Adaptation is a stage where people come together to grasp the inclusivity of cultures and inculcate the practices or policies up to an extent and are ready to practice it when required, here They can adapt the perspective of another culture by empathizing and respecting them interculturally and emotionally. They indulge themselves to others to understand their experiences and when they can interact in a relaxed authentic and appropriate way with people from varied cultures.

Bennette has written “Adaptation offers an alternative to assimilation. The adaptation involved the extension of your repertoire of beliefs and behavior not a substitution of one set of another so you don’t need to lose your primary cultural identity to operate effectively in a different cultural text.” He has stressed more on assimilation which is defined as abandoning the culture and identifying and adopting the others, especially the dominant culture.

- **Integration:** The evolvement of Identity and self-understanding to incorporate belief value perspective and behavior covers the idea of integration.

As Bennett, “Integration of cultural difference is a state in which one’s experience of self is expanded to include the movement in and out during the cultural world views… people can experience themselves as multicultural beings who are constantly choosing the most appropriate cultural context for their behavior.”

Integration is most likely to occur in schools or colleges with culturally diverse students and families that are operated by grown-ups whose demographics mirror the diversity of students.

Integration occurs in those who expatriate to other countries for a more extended period in other countries who travel their whole life by living in extensive parts of the world thus they explicitly adopt and integrate the background of the community.

5. Barriers to Cross-Cultural Communication

- **Ethnocentrisms:** Ethnocentrism creates the idea of Us versus Them here we judge or look at other cultures through our lens it happens when we are deducible and approach according to our belief system towards the paradigm is the right and only way due to which we become judgmental and perceive others behavior odd and improper and have a mentality that can be detrimental.

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- **Stereotype:** People generally rely on stereotypical or cliché ideas from different cultures learning about the diversified culture can be useful at the start but people tend to believe certain prior incidents and make a rigid notion about ethnicities or nationalities without ever knowing the actual truth.

- **Psychological Barrier:** When a person's mind is preoccupied and distracted it is difficult for him to be competent People prefer to be unauthentic if their natural preferences are not as they desire and it is not easy to go against it, To manage people cross-culturally must concentrate and need to flex his or her style. For instance, an employee from X country went to Y country to work and in the process of giving feedback he was direct with negative aspects of feedback thus the other employees from Y country might get offended and feel attacked as they are used to the positive approach of getting feedback in that case employee from country X will won't be able to fit in and eventually will leave.

- **Language Barrier:** All teams have customary language to communicate with others but when there is less fluency with the language it might create social isolation among the members People will withdraw themselves quickly which means the team may not get the required inputs Understanding the purpose of the conversation is challenging if the speakers speak swiftly and use too much of slang this might influence competence of people.

- **Demography:** Collaboration with a virtual team is more challenging when the group members come from different places and zones thus, they are unable to perform up to their potential to make people share information they need to show concentration, and after facing many hurdles must interact and build a relationship in a traditional office environment.

- **Conflict:** In cross-cultural setup clashes easily happen because culture is like an iceberg and what we see is usually not the real story the values are invisible until it is unfolded by correct communication when we or others fail to understand behavior and compromise the values there is no right or wrong way to do things it's just the matter of cultural work and understanding empathetically can resolve the conflict.

6. How to Overcome Cross-Cultural Communication

- **Be Open-Minded:** Rigidity should be avoided in the beginning and assumptions should not have any place while communicating cross-culturally because believing beforehand what others might feel will create a weak communication and connection circle in the firm One must understand that a person from a different country will carry different values and belief thus his/her approach toward the situations and process of communication will be distinct.

- **Acquire Knowledge:** The best way to establish communication cross-culturally is to gain understanding and knowledge about other cultures, this way The communicator will be more understanding and respectful of someone else's way of living life Even though your ideologies will not match up it will aid your first few interactions and

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eventually the research that is done by you would reflect in your way of attending the other person which would make them feel a sense of belongingness and comfort.

- **Diversity Trainings:** Educating your employees about the cultures will be a great help for them to coexist and function efficiently this will break down the barriers because triggering aspects would be discussed healthily. Even sending a welcome email and celebrating festivals will make a lot of difference this will not only educate them but they will feel that their company cares about their well-being and culture and the feeling of togetherness will be more present and will comfort them.

- **Restrain:** Patience is the key to the lock of cultural communication a restrained employee makes sure that communication is smooth cross-culturally and there is no misunderstanding in the process thus he/she makes sure that everyone is comfortable while communicating anything because they are not used to your culture and language they may take time allow them to take extra time and don't be afraid to ask about the clarifications if you are not sure of something As they say: 'You get the chicken by hatching the egg, not by smashing it.' Be patient, and let the egg hatch.

- **Simplicity:** Undoubtedly any communication process should be clear and concise adding jargon and complicated words in the language will make the communication more complicated, slang should also be avoided at all costs, using the speech of a specific region is a no-no it will make the employee highly uncomfortable and they won't communicate to you, it is best to avoid it altogether to prevent any confusion.

II. QUESTION BANKS

- Why learning cross-cultural communication important?
- Write short notes on:
  - Acceptance
  - Adaptation
  - Ethnocentrisms
  - Ethnorelativism
- Mention barriers to cross-cultural communication.
- Explain Bennette's developmental model of an intercultural society.
- Explain how to overcome barriers to cross-cultural communication.

III. REFERENCES

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