

CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION

Abstract

This chapter explores the complexities of cross-cultural communication within the context of language and literature. It delves into the concept of culture and its dimensions, highlighting how these elements shape literary expressions. The analysis then moves on to interpreting multicultural texts, emphasizing the challenges of language differences and cultural nuances. The chapter further examines the relationship between language and identity in cultural literature, showcasing how language is a tool for self-expression and identity formation. Finally, it explores the role of media and technology in facilitating cross-cultural communication, while acknowledging the potential pitfalls of misinterpretation and stereotyping. In conclusion, the chapter emphasizes the significance of cross-cultural communication in fostering understanding and appreciation for diverse literary traditions and cultural perspectives.

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In the era of globalization, cross-cultural communication serves to connect to the masses and understand different cultures. It has provided a great transformational shift in the field of language and literature where the interplay between the dimensions of culture, language, and communication has taken center stage to understand different cultures across the globe. It provides a great opportunity for stories and traditions to converge from various cultural groups. It serves to navigate the complexities of cultural norms, linguistic differences, and how different individuals from various backgrounds interact with the literary work.

Cross-cultural communication provides an opportunity to explore how individuals from different communities and backgrounds interact, express themselves, and construct narratives that provide insights into diverse ways in which language and culture intersect. In the ever-changing landscape of literature and linguistics, cross-cultural communication emerges as a force that takes us beyond geographical, linguistic as well and cultural boundaries.

This chapter sheds light on elements that shape our understanding of various cultural dimensions that differentiate various cultures and how these differences affect literary work. It also talks about the role of technology in media concerning literature. Let's dive in for more understanding of the topic.

I. CULTURE AND ITS DIMENSION IN LITERARY EXPRESSIONS

When we talk about cross-cultural communication, it becomes quintessential to understand what culture is. As per the Oxford dictionary, Culture refers to 'the customs and beliefs, art, way of life, and social organization of a particular country or group'. Culture is shared by a group and defines how they perceive various aspects of life. It is a complex and multifaceted concept that can be learned and transmitted through socialization which later defines the person's behavior and way of communication.

Culture is a complex system that includes various characteristics that a particular group of people or society shares with each other such as shared beliefs, norms, values, traditions, symbols (which hold religious as well as traditional values) as well as common practices. It defines how individuals from any community understand the world around them and interpret different cultural things as well as verbal and non-verbal cues in communication. It also defines a person's perspective of the world and identities. It includes tangible as well as non-tangible aspects where tangible includes ancient texts, art, literature, language as well and rituals and non-tangible aspects include code of conduct, moral values, social norms as well and world view.

It is generally transmitted from generation to generation through various means such as communication, observation as well and socializing within the group. Culture can also be transmitted to other cultural groups through interaction, sharing, and adoption of various cultural elements. Cultural transmission can be done through migration and immigration, trade and commerce, Media and technology, social networks as well as a celebration of various cultural festivals and events. Other ways include intermarriage as well as intermingling. Globalization is the main reason for the awareness and spread of various cultural attributes.

Dutch social psychologist **Geert Hofstede** developed a framework that can be used to analyze and understand cultural differences. The six cultural dimensions are: -

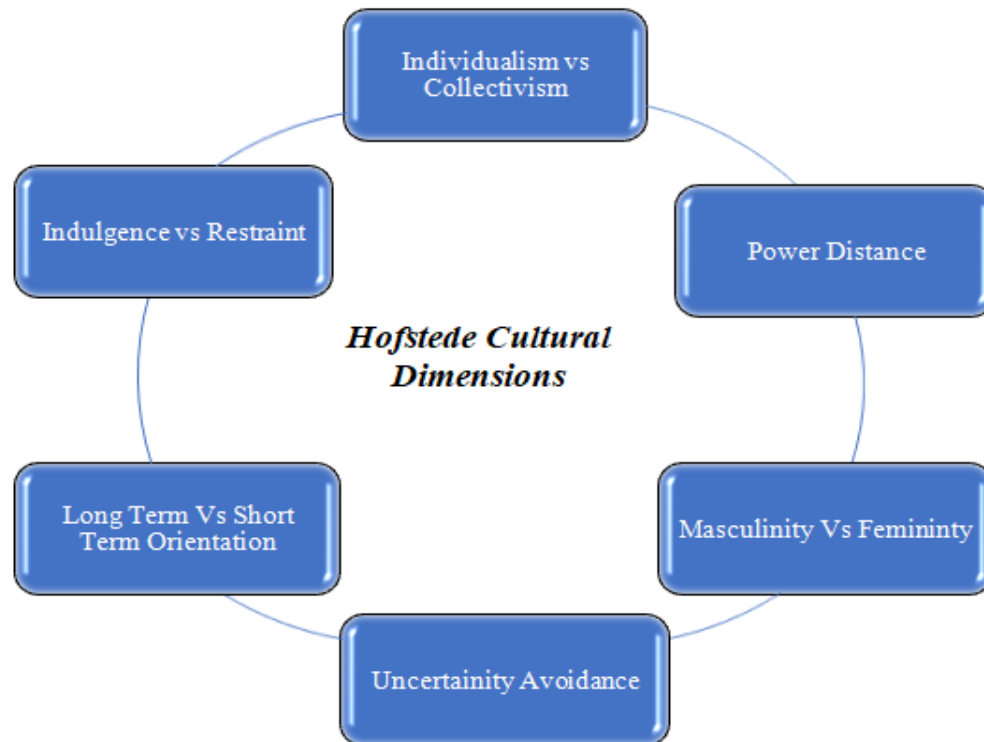


Figure 1: Hofstede Cultural Dimensions

- 1. Individualism vs. Collectivism:** It refers to the degree to which a society is integrated into a group. It also analyses the individual's preference for personal interest or group interest and to which extent it is present in the decision-making. Individualism focuses on 'I' that is, personal growth, freedom, privacy, and personal achievements whereas Collectivism emphasizes 'we' where group harmony, cooperation, and collective well-being are focused.

In Countries like the UK, people are more inclined towards individualism where personal success is considered more important than the group. Here, people prefer individual recognition over the group.

- 2. Power Distance:** It refers to the distribution of power in the society and defines how less powerful member of the society is treated/accepted. In high power distance, hierarchy can be observed in social structure based on age, job, position, family status, etc. In a low power distance social structure, people are treated equally and given equal rights.

In countries like the USA, there is a low power-distance social structure where people call each other by their first name even to the elder people of the community in various cases whereas China and Japan can be seen as High-power distance countries/ cultural groups as elders in community as well as company are given high importance. Also, people of high profile are treated with high respect and are rarely objected to.

- 3. Masculinity vs. Femininity:** It analyses society's desire for traits of tough vs. delicate. Masculinity traits include the desire for achievement, competitiveness, and prioritizing success and ambition whereas Femininity traits include quality of life, nurturing, the feeling of collaboration, emphasizing societal well-being, and quality of life. Countries/cultural groups with Masculine traits like to focus on success, growth, and competition where those who succeed are given more value and importance. Feminine trait cultural groups/countries focus on quality of life, peaceful living, and world peace.

The countries with masculinity can be Switzerland, and Japan where achievement is more focused on and success is generally measured by financial gains whereas Countries with femininity can be Denmark, and Netherlands where work-life balance as well as caring for others is more valued.

- 4. Uncertainty Avoidance:** High uncertainty avoidance tries to minimize risk by forming clear guidelines, rules, and rigid structures. Low uncertainty avoidance is more open to change and innovation and is flexible in dealing with various challenges. High uncertainty Avoidance countries/ cultural groups lack innovation due to uncertainty related to the change.

Countries like France are considered high in certainty avoidance as people are more averse to risk-taking and strict rules and regulations are followed to avoid uncertainties. People are more open to change and are considered more innovative in countries like America.

- 5. Long Term vs Short Term Orientation:** The cultural focus is on long-term planning and prioritizing sustainable efforts. Short-term orientation as the name suggests quick results and high adaptability in changing circumstances. Global warming can be a classic example of short-term orientation where the environment is not considered and only growth is focused on. Now the entire world is facing issues regarding the same.

Countries like Italy, Greece as well and Spain among many others value immediate enjoyment and pleasures. Hence, they are perfect examples of short-term orientation. The long-term orientation can be seen in countries like Switzerland, Finland, and Israel as they focus on future development by focusing on infrastructure, education, research, and development for future growth.

- 6. Indulgence vs Restraint:** People like to indulge in personal enjoyment and happiness in indulgence versus restraint refers to abstaining from such enjoyments and focuses on self-discipline. Indulgence may sound like 'we only live once' whereas Restraint may sound like 'You should cut your coat according to your cloth'.

Indulgence can be seen in countries like Italy, and Brazil among others where people focus more on enjoying leisurely meals as well as carnivals. Restraint can be seen in Saudi Arabia, Japan as well as Germany where people restrain themselves by adhering to laws and traditions and restricting themselves from showing excess emotions in public.

These cultural dimensions can differentiate one culture from the other and define the values and traditions held by the society. These dimensions also affect how the literature has been written throughout history and even modern times. The form of

expression used in the literary work can be a poem, novel, speech, and much more which can be different depending on power distance as well as other dimensions since it defines how direct can be the context of the literature. It also includes the language used to describe the events. How the language has been used to denote different strata of the community as well as how the scenario has been described? The language used to describe the community as well as other innate objects define the cultural value held by them in the era the text has referred to. The theory is highly used in management for cross-cultural communication and defines how societies and groups differ in their values, behavior as well and preferences. It can also provide an understanding and analysis of cultural differences among nations and different organizations. Can you define where your society lies concerning Hofstede's cultural dimensions?

The cultural differences that differentiate various cultural groups can be seen in literary work. Cultural Dimensions can be easily seen through the literature and can define the cultural values of that society. For example, through the literature of India, we can identify the existence of joint family and high-power distance dimension being relevant in society. Literature has been the most important medium to understand the society of different eras where you can easily grasp their viewpoints, superstitions, way of life, and beyond. Culture also defines the narrative style of the writer across the globe. Different cultures portray their history and literature in different styles of narration. Some culture uses a straight storytelling approach whereas others use poems, and metaphors to narrate their literature.



Practical Tips

Educate yourself about different culture. Learn about their customs, values, and norms. Be aware of difference in culture before interacting with different cultural group.

II. INTERPRETING MULTICULTURAL TEXTS

Multicultural texts are literary works that originate from different cultural backgrounds reflecting experiences, values, and different ethnic, racial as well and social group perspectives. They showcase the world's diversity in human culture as well as the complexity of Societies, histories, and views towards the world. These may also include various genres such as prose, poems, novels, plays, and many more.

Some examples of multicultural texts as per different cultural groups are as follows-

1. **African Culture:** Novels like 'Things Fall Apart' written by Chinua Achebe provide information about Igbo culture and traditions followed in Nigeria as portraying the impact of British colonialism in the late 19th Century.
2. **Latin American Culture:** A realist novel 'One Hundred Years of Solitude' by Gabriel Garcia Marquez talks about the history and culture of Latin America about the Buendia family.

3. **Caribbean Culture:** The prequel to 'Jane Eyre' is 'Wide Sargasso Sea' written by Jean Rhys talks about the character Bertha Mason's backstory and provides a glimpse into Caribbean culture.
4. **Hispanic Culture:** Mexican culture and romance are talked about in a famous novel by Laura Esquivel 'Like Water for Chocolate'.
5. **Arabic Culture:** The novel 'The Kite Runner' by Khaled Hosseini provides a glimpse into Afghan and Arab culture focusing on friendship, betrayal, and redemption.
6. **Chinese Culture:** 'The Good Earth' by Pearl S. Sacks depicts Chinese peasants' lives highlighting their values and struggle during the early 20th century.

These texts show different cultures and societies following different traditions around the globe providing insights into their history, values, and challenges.

Multicultural texts present various challenges in interpretation due to the complexity of language and differences in culture. A word may have two meanings that can be easily understood by the native speaker but may not be interpreted correctly by other people. An example of the same will be 'Tetis Koti devi devta', which may mean 33 crore gods and goddesses as well as 33 high-level gods and goddesses. The same can be seen in the case of 'Aaliyah' which is seen as an auspicious symbol in countries like India whereas it is seen as a Nazi symbol by the West due to the culture change. This can be seen with various other symbols used in parts of the world which can be easily misinterpreted as per the culture of the interpreter which may collide with the ideas of the native language speaker. The major difficulty can be seen in text about pros and poems which may include metaphors and simile which is taken in the literal sense and create misinterpretation concerning what the native writer wanted to express or tell.

Translation of native texts needs to be done accurately considering cultural values and traditions to get the gist of literal texts. The translation should be done after extensive research about the culture and events related to that area or time to avoid mistranslations. Some words do not have words in the other language that should be accepted as it is to keep the meaning intact rather than forcefully finding a word in the other language as it can lead to a change in the meaning and completely change the translated document. When the non-native translator is unable to understand certain text then it is advisable to take help from natives to get valuable insights and ensure accurate and proper representation. Translators can also make use of footnotes and other symbols to describe the sense of the text whose concept is foreign to non-native people.



Practical Tips

Show respect for differences in cultural values, even when they differ from your own values. Try to understand and be humble towards the same to develop rapport and trust.

III. LANGUAGE AND IDENTITY IN CULTURAL LITERATURE

Language is a fundamental aspect of human communication that is complex and structured and involves sound, words, symbols as well and grammar. It is used to express human emotions, thoughts, ideas as well and intentions. It also becomes a medium for people to share their experiences, learn from one another, and interact with various cultural as well as social groups. Each language has its different rules, vocabulary, forms, structure, and significant cultural background.

Identity refers to an amalgamation of characteristics, beliefs, values, and more that defines an individual and differentiates them from others. It defines who someone is and how that someone is perceived from the worldview. There are various aspects of identity. These include personal, social, cultural, Ethnic, gender as well and sexual identity.

Language and identity are interlinked and play a significant role in cross-cultural literature. Language is a communication tool that helps in self-expression and identity formation. It reflects an individual's cultural background and social upbringing including ethnicity, nationality as well and social class. Language plays a huge role in shaping, expressing as well and reflecting individuals' sense of self and the world.

Language can also play a significant role in creating a new cultural group as it changes the literature and how people respond to each other. It forms a means to differentiate oneself from a certain group in society. English language brought during the colonial period was a way to westernize the Indian mind and introduce English literature to the masses. It was also a tool used by colonial rulers to erode the indigenous language which can lead to change in the culture. People who lose their language may experience disconnection from their cultural heritage and even adopt the culture of the language they grasp.

The language barrier is a communication obstacle that can arise due to noise during the interaction, different accents, and pronunciations, cultural differences, Limited proficiency, or lack of common language. It can also play a huge role in misunderstanding as well as miscommunication of different cultures. It can also lead to major conflicts as well as stereotyping.

Language is interlinked in such a manner that people staying far away from their houses find solace in their native language at home to feel attached to their native roots and identity. It forms a basis for keeping their culture and identity intact in a foreign land. Language is also a means of restoring folklore, stories that preserve the identity of a cultural group. Different languages become carriers of different knowledge, narrative forms, and baskets of dynamic global literary landscapes.



Practical Tips

To ensure proper understanding, it is advisable to ask for feedback or confirmation so that everyone is ensured to be on same page.

IV. MEDIA AND TECHNOLOGY IN CULTURAL COMMUNICATION

Media is a channel and platform that can be used to transmit news as well as information to a wide audience. It includes various forms such as traditional form which includes print media as well as TV, radio, and modern digital form which includes social media, broadcasts, the internet, and more.

Technology is the tools and systems which are used to solve various problems and reach the goal efficiently. It ranges from as simple as wheels to as complex as an artificial technology.

In modern days, Technology has become an essential part of our day-to-day life. Various Social media platforms have become a means of sharing culture and language among the masses. With the advancement of technology, people across the globe can connect through varied platforms. Technology has bridged the gap created by geographical conditions and expanded the person's reach beyond the country's borders.

People meet each other through virtual meeting places such as social media transcending geographical borders. They provide the gateway to peek into each other's culture and share ideas and experiences. People feel fascinated by each other's culture and get to know about it in just a click. Learning through virtual mode about a different culture and adapting what feels suitable for the person has become a new reality.

Social media platforms help people learn about tradition, lifestyle, festivals, and more through posts, reels, comments, and more. Platforms like YouTube helps individual to share their cultural aspects such as cooking, customs, and other art forms through reels as well as informational videos. Challenges persist concerning misinterpretation, cultural insensitivity, and the spread of stereotypes which can occur due to fast paced nature of technology and media where you may not clarify everything in a short period.

Stereotyping must be avoided at all cost and open mindedness as well as respect should be given to other cultures for building positive relationships. It is required to cultivate cultural awareness and be aware for prejudices that you hold in mind to remove negativity from your mind about a certain cultural group. To have a proper cross-cultural communication, it become extremely important to be an active listener and ask as many questions as possible to avoid miscommunication. Asking for feedback can also be one way to evaluate if there is miscommunication. Good intercultural relationships take time so do not fret over your mistakes and try to learn from them. Be open to change to develop yourself and expanding your worldview.

Emerging technologies such as virtual reality can be a boon for cross-cultural communication where people can meet in a virtual world with people of different communities and can even experience the culture and life of different communities while staying in the comfort of their homes. These virtual worlds can make it possible for the person to visit the entire world virtually while experiencing various cultures and get to the nitty-gritty of the various cultural groups to better understand verbal as well as non-verbal ways of communication by different groups.

Media and technology have immensely transformed the way cross-cultural communication takes place by providing opportunities to connect with various cultural groups from diverse backgrounds. These tools used mindfully can lead to a connected world where cultural diversity is celebrated, and unity is strengthened.



Practical Tips

Do not pay heed to stereotypes for understanding about a cultural group. It can lead to misunderstanding and prejudice.

V. CONCLUSION

Cross-cultural communication within language and linguistic context offers a deep understanding of culture, Language, and communication. We can easily evaluate the interconnectedness of language, culture, and communication to understand the literary work of various cultural groups. A literature review of various cultural groups provides insight into how various groups differ and how they treat various objects. The lack of understanding of the language and cross-cultural communication can provide a shallow knowledge of the culture which in turn can cause major harm by creating stereotypes and misunderstandings of a cultural group in the masses.

The increase in technology and media has provided a great boost to literature and literary work. It has not only provided an expanded view of literary creations but also led to innovative and diverse narrative forms challenging traditional norms and conventions. In essence, we can easily see that cross-cultural communication is a lens that invites us to explore the intricate work of literature, culture as well and the narratives that are spread across the globe among various cultural groups within the domain of literature and linguistics.



Practical Tips

Familiarise yourself regarding some basic cultural etiquette such as greetings and gestures as non verbal communication is easy to learn and can develop a good relationship with the other person/ group.

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