

Inter cultural communication essay sample

[Sociology](#), [Communication](#)



* Inter cultural is the process of sending and receiving messages between people of different cultural background.

Opportunities in a Global Marketplace

* Opens borders and allows worldwide competition.

* Domestic workforce becomes more diverse : people from different nationalities working in one company. Companies can recruit workers from a broad pool of talent; and benefit from broad range of viewpoints and ideas; and have better understanding of other markets.

Challenges

* Motivating workers from different countries and cultures.

* Working with them in teams

* Need to understand some of their culture to prevent mis-communication.

Definition of Culture

* Is a shared system of symbols, beliefs, attitudes, values, expectations, and norms for behaviour.

* Subcultures are distinct groups that exist within a major culture.

Culture includes the following :

* Language

* Non verbal signals

- * Word meanings

- * Time and space issues

- * Rules of human behavior ; what is acceptable and not.

How culture is learned

- * Listening to advice from family members, relatives, and elderly people (direct).

- * Also by observing other people's behaviour (indirect)

Recognizing Cultural Differences

1. Social values

- * Formal rules of etiquette (exp table manners) are explicit and well defined.

- * Informal rules are learned through observation and imitation. Exp

(i) attitudes towards work and success – do they emphasize hard work and material success?

(ii) Roles and status – the way top management is addressed eg Mr Roberts or using title ' president' ' manager'

(iii) Use of manners – exp ' How was your weekend?' is a common way of making small talk in U. S. but sounds intrusive (busybody) to people where business and private lives are separate.

(iv) Concepts of time – do they follow time very strictly and are very punctual (Japanese) or being late is considered acceptable.

2. Contextual differences

* Some culture depend on words more than non verbal communication to communicate while other culture use less words and more non verbal communication.

3. Legal and Ethical Differences

* Legal systems differ from culture to culture

* Ethical choices like bribing officials are seen differently from culture to culture.

4. Non Verbal Differences

* Greetings – do people shake hands, kiss lightly on both sides of the face?

* Personal space – when people are talking do they stand close or far from each other.

* Facial expressions – do people shake their heads to indicate ‘ no’ or nod to them to say ‘ yes’

* Eye contact – in some culture eye contact is a must as it signifies honesty and openness (U. S) but in other cultures is aggressive and showing no respect.

5. Age differences

- * Are older people highly respected (Asian) ; or youth emphasized (US) – where older colleagues communicate as equals with younger colleagues.

6. Gender Differences

- * Perception of men and women in business. In some culture, women do not work or get involved in business.

Dealing with Language Barriers

- * English is the most prevalent language in international business, but it's a mistake to assume that everyone understands it.
- * Watch for clues to be sure that your message is getting through to people who don't speak your language
- * If you have a long term business relationship with people of another culture, it is helpful to learn their language.

Barriers to Written Communication

- * Most routine business correspondence is written in English, but marketing messages are generally translated into language of the country where the product is sold.
- * Consider the meaning of the message and the way it will appear to the receiver when translating from one language into another.

Ethnocentrism and Stereotyping

* Ethnocentrism is the tendency to judge all other groups according to your own groups standards, behaviours and customs and to see other people as inferior by comparison.

* Stereotyping is the attempt to categorize individuals by trying to predict their behaviour or character on the basis of their membership in a particular group.

* To overcome ethnocentrism and stereotyping :

i) avoid assumptions

ii) avoid judgements

iii) acknowledge distinctions.

Improving Intercultural Communication Skills

1. Study other culture

* Research can help you grasp the basics of other culture

* Mistakes will happen, when they do, apologize and ask about the accepted way and move on.

* Source : websites and books that offer advice on travelling to and working in specific cultures. Sample newspapers, magazines to get an idea of dress, nonverbal customs, manners etc.

2. Study Other Languages

- * English is the most prevalent language in international business, but it's a mistake to assume everyone understands it.
- * Many companies find that they must be able to conduct business in languages other than English.
- * If you have long term business relationship with people of another culture, it is helpful to learn their language.
- * Even if the same language is spoken in another country, don't assume that it is spoken the same way.

U. S. English

British English

apartment

Flat

eggplant

aubergine

elevator

lift

Long distance call

Trunk call

Pharmacist

chemist

Sweater

pullover

3. Communication style

* Formality may vary. In U. S. workers prefer open and direct communication styles. Japanese workers tend to be less direct.

4. Writing Clearly

* Use simple, clear language – avoid words with double meanings.

* Be brief – simple sentences, short paragraphs.

* Transitional elements – helps readers to follow your speech eg. furthermore, for example, in contrast, however, firstly, finally, in conclusion.

* Address international correspondence properly

* Cite numbers and dates carefully

For exp : in U. S 12-05-08 means December 5, 2008

In Europe it means May 12, 2008

* Avoid slang, idiomatic phrases and business jargon

Eg. face the music, in sixes and sevens.

- * Avoid humour and other references to popular culture

- local tv shows, local artists,

5. Speak Clearly

- * Speak slowly and clearly – stop at punctuating marks

- * Don't rephrase until its necessary – it may confuse them more because they have 2 sets of words to translate and comprehend.

When rephrasing, choose simpler words; don't just repeat loudly.

- * Look for and ask for feedback – be alert to signs of confusions in your listener

- * Don't talk down to other person – don't get frustrated with the listener for not understanding.

- * Learn foreign phrases

- * Clarify what will happen next – at the end of the conversation, be sure that you and the listener agree on what has been said and decided. Follow up with a memo / letter to summarize the conversation.

6. Listening Carefully

- * Accept what you hear without judgment and let people finish what they have to say.

7. Using Interpreters, Translators and Translation Software

* Microsoft spends several hundred million dollars a year to make virtually all of its software products, websites and help documents available in dozens of languages : the company is believed by some to be the world's largest purchaser of translation services.

8. Help Others adapt to your culture

* When communicating with people from other cultures, suggest e-mail or intranet sites.