

# Ethnocentrism: cross-cultural communication assignment

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Ethnocentrism, an important concept in intercultural communication (IC), has been thoroughly discussed and investigated in present researches and studies. We may regard ethnocentrism as the feeling that one's group has a mode of living, values and patterns of adaptation that are superior to all others. Berry and Kalin concluded that ethnocentrism is lacking acceptance of cultural diversity and intolerance for outgroups. According to Bennett et al. (2004), an individual with ethnocentric views will avoid cultural differences through denying its existence, raising defense against the differences and minimizing its importance. Under such circumstances, potential communication problems could result in misunderstandings (Neuliep & McCroskey, 1997) and reduced levels of intercultural-willingness-to-communicate (Lin & Rancer, 2003). Negative stereotypes, prejudice and behaviours against the outgroup would obstruct effective intercultural communications from taking place. Qingwen et al. (2007). Examples of IC problems originated from ethnocentrism are not scarce in our daily lives. With the return of sovereignty in 1997, there was an increasing number of Mainland Chinese moving to Hong Kong. I have a few friends from the mainland. They told me Mainland Chinese in Hong Kong are still subjected to negative labeling and regarded as "inferior" to Hong Kong Chinese. Meanwhile, Hong Kong Chinese remain conceited in their ways of life even some of them realize the Mainland Chinese have outperformed them. Another example was my friend's experience of taking IELTS examination last year. She was not contented with her score in the oral test. She quoted what the Australian examiner said: "Your English is having a strong American accent." She thought she was unfairly graded because of the

examiner's bias over American English, but not of her performance. From the above examples, we could see the origins of ethnocentrism could be diversified and ascribed to economic, cultural and national factors.

In example one, we could see that Hong Kong Chinese regarded Mainland Chinese as an economic threat, probably with the growing trend of more business employers turning their back to Hong Kong Chinese for the Mainland Chinese. Culturally speaking, Hong Kong Chinese believe they are enjoying a cultural supremacy under British education system and Hong Kong is more globalized than any parts of China. Limited exposure and openness towards Mainland Chinese and their cultures caused the IC problems in Hong Kong.

Cultural generalization also helps to explain the general distaste of Mainland Chinese in the ways they behave, for example, not following the queues. In example two, the Australian examiner' ethnocentric attitude against the American accent gives us several possible implications. Firstly, by showing his intolerance to the outgroup accent, he was protecting his own cultural identity and upholding the superiority of Australian accent. Secondly, the certain degree of anti-americanism on cultural intolerance may come along with the hidden political discontents.

For example, the examiner himself might want to show his discontents over Bush Administration and wars on terrorism. To conclude, ethnocentrism was detrimental to intercultural communications and we should handle it tactfully through enhancing our IC sensitivity and understandings of other cultures.

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