

Cross-cultural communication

Business



Communication can be defined as the conveying of or exchange of information between two people. Cross-cultural communication can be simply looked at as the study of how persons from varied cultural backgrounds communicate amongst themselves and also across the different cultures. This is of great value as it allows us not only to appreciate the diversity in culture but also provides us with the opportunity to learn from the various cultures. The understanding of someone else's culture smooth's the progress of cross cultural communication and this is so because the basic principles and processes describing the other forms of communication also apply in cross cultural communication.

The cross cultural communication started due to the advancements in economic growth and technological developments which led to breaking down of cultural barriers as businesses looked for ways to expand and seek foreign markets. This was so as companies had to cope with the new set of dynamic issues as they considered the global market (Walker, D. et al, 2003, pp. 4). As a result, language training was initiated so as to overcome the cultural barriers and this has led to a demand for these languages and in turn educational institutions have been forced to incorporate intercultural understanding and knowledge into their curriculums. With the advancement in cross cultural communication, the social relations have changed significantly as it has allowed people to move across borders and also led to intermarrying.

For successful communication to be effected or said to have taken place between the parties involved, both within a given culture or between cultures it necessitates that the intended message or information issued by

the sender is precisely received and deduced by the receiver. The information sent from speaker to listener always entails huge array of features, such as expressions, sentence structure, idioms, tone of voice, emphasis, speed, emotion, and body language, and the interpretation requires the listener to attend to all of these features, while at the sametime constructing an understanding of the speaker's intentions, emotions, politeness, seriousness, character, beliefs, priorities, motivations, and style of communicating. Additionally, the listener ought to also appraise whether the remark is a question or a declaration and how and to what extent a statement matters to the speaker (Maltz and Borker, 1982). For cross cultural communication to be clearly understood, words and body language are not enough even though they may be clear as there is more information needed to effectively convey the information across cultures. Aspects such as the tone variation, pronunciation should be taken into consideration. For instance, in some cultures the people are used to turn down offers of food even refreshments when the first few offers are made and these can be interpreted by the other party as a turn down therefore they end up not offering anything.

This clearly indicates that it is of importance to be able to understand and learn the different cultural cues as this helps to improve or make communication more effective and as a listener, one must pay great attention to what is being communicated, the circumstances under which the communication is being conveyed and by whom. It is very important that the speaker should comprehend the grammar of a given language or culture and also how the elements of language are socially positioned in order to achieve

communicative proficiency. The elements of cross cultural communication is said to be culturally relevant in the same manner the human experience is considered to be culturally relevant. To understand cross cultural norms of communication, one needs to take into account the semiotics and the appraisal of the sign structure. In any form of communication, challenges are encountered which mostly hinder the conveying of the message as error free communication is uncommon.

A similar case also applies to cross cultural communications which offer challenges. In cross cultural communication, the major problem faced is language barrier. Language relays with it subliminal meanings transmitted through vocabulary, stress and tone and the inappropriate use of words hidden behind phrases send messages can distort the message as it can be interpreted differently. When it comes to language barrier, the way of speaking creates the utmost reason for miscommunication. In addition, another challenge is how communication is perceived. In this case, attention is mainly given to body language.

Different cultures have different ways of interpreting body language. For example, in the Chinese culture, waving at a person is intended to indicate to that person to come where you are unlike in the western culture where it means to say goodbye. Such a small gesture can result in miscommunication due to the cross cultural differences and such should be observed or learned by the speaker. Behavioral constraint is another challenge as every culture has its own set of laws on proper behavior that adversely affects verbal and nonverbal communication. Such behavioral constraints include making eye contact where in some cultures it can be interpreted as a lack of respect

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especially when addressing the elderly, the proximity of how one stands to another when talking and also the tonal variation. All these differences in behavioral restrictions make cross cultural communication ineffective and difficult.

Furthermore, in some cultures, there are the primary linguistic similarities between the languages which can result in difficulties in translation as this tends to increase the possibility of communicators assuming the similarity in meanings therefore misinterpreting the conveyed information. Finally, stereotyping inhibits communication as they alter perception and result in pre-selected interpretations thus hindering the objective understanding of the communication. In conclusion, cross cultural communication is of importance as it allows us to appreciate the diversity in cultures and lead to social development and therefore it should be encouraged and practiced. The faced challenges can be curtailed by us learning and understanding the differences in cultural differences.