Inter & Cross- Cultural Communication Journey Frame of Cultural Identity

Dr. Khalid Sultan, Assistant professor, Department of Communication Studies, College of Applied Sciences, Nizwa, Ministry of Higher Education, Sultanate of Oman

Dr. Mirza Jan, Assistant professor, Department of Mass Communication, Gomal University, D. I. Khan, KPK (Pakistan).

Syed Farhan Aziz, Lecturer, dept. of Communication Studies, College of Applied Sciences, Nizwa, Ministry of Higher Education, Oman

Zoha Khalid, Department of Journalism & Mass Communication, Peshawar University, Pakistan

ABSTRACT

This paper review inters and cross cultural communication. People in the World having different culture interact with each other. Communication is a multilayered dynamic process. As the world become smaller, we interact with people. Cultural identity also exists, but with another meaning. Communication in general and intercultural communication in particular, for a proper decoding of the messages it is of paramount importance to recognize to what an extent people’s identity contributes to formulate and convey the information. This paper discusses communication technology which brings us in contact with people. It is the base of frame of discourse.

Keywords: Inter & Cross, Cultural communication, Multilayered, Technology, Frame of discourse, Theories

1. Introduction

Understanding Intercultural Communication as a discipline starts with the question of the definitions of culture and communication, both of which have been subject to endless theoretical discussions that often do not reach a consensus. We live in rapidly changing times. Although no one can foresee the future, we believe that changes are increasing the imperative for intercultural learning. Intercultural communication takes place when individuals influenced by different cultural communities negotiate shared meanings in interaction (Ting-Toomey, 1999). Communication is the exchange of meaning; it is my attempt to let you know what I mean. Communication includes any behavior that another human being perceives and interprets; it is your understanding of what I mean. Communication includes sending both verbal messages (words) and nonverbal messages (tone of voice, facial expression, behavior, and physical setting). It includes consciously sent messages as well as messages that the sender is totally unaware of sending. Communication therefore involves a complex, multilayered, dynamic process through which we exchange meaning. What counts as intercultural communication depends in part on what one considers a culture, and the definition of culture itself is quite contestable. Some authorities limit the term “intercultural communication” to refer only to communication among individuals from different nationalities (Gudykunst, 2003).

2. CULTURE

Culture is the philosophy of life, the values, norms and rules, and actual behavior - as well as the material and immaterial products from these – which are taken over by man from the past generations, and which man wants to bring forward to the next generation - eventually in a different form – and which in one way or another separate individuals belonging to the culture from individuals belonging to other cultures.
2.1 CROSS-CULTURE

1. The relativity of each culture - the cultural hierarchy
2. The co-incidence of the cultures - the cultural categories
3. The changeability of each culture - the cultural dynamic
4. The ethical problems related to cross-cultural studies - what can we allow ourselves to do in other cultures?

2.3 CROSS or INTER?

Cross-cultural” applies to something which covers more than one culture. For example “a cross-cultural study of education in Western Europe” would be a comparison of chosen aspects of education in various countries or regions, but would consider each country or region separately and would not suggest any interaction between the various educational systems. On the other hand, the term “intercultural” implies interaction. From an intercultural perspective, it would be possible to study the experiences of students or teachers who move from one educational system to another, or to examine the interactions of students from different countries enrolled in a specific class or program. “Culture shock” and “cultural adaptation” are thus intercultural notions.

The term intercultural is chosen over the largely synonymous term cross-cultural because it is linked to language use such as “interdisciplinary” that is cooperation between people with different scientific backgrounds. Perhaps the term also has somewhat fewer connotations than cross-cultural. It is not cultures that communicate, whatever that might imply, but people (and possibly social institutions) with different cultural backgrounds that do. In general, the term “cross-cultural” is probably best used for comparisons between cultures (“cross-cultural comparison”).

3. Frames of Discourse

A fruitful way of talking about intercultural communication, dialogue and their mutual entry points is to introduce the use of the term “frame of discourse” (or just “frame”). Michael Agar defines it as something which “sets a boundary around the details and highlights how these details are related to each other.” (1994: 130) Frames “stretch language beyond the circle (beyond language’s limits, S.H.), and frames take language and culture and make them inseparable.” (132) Meaning is created in the framing of our “expectations, not certainties.” (134) I find the term “frame” useful because of its tool-like, special (or time-special) character and because, according to Agar, it can be stretched; the space and time within it can be expanded to include more people, views, factors, diversity, cultural and personal differences, etc. This stretching also implies its opposite, i.e., to constrict and converge the perception and thought onto the moment of a decision and act, a gesture toward the realism of daily life and getting results. When the frames coherently organize several rich points that work with people of a particular social identity, be it nationality, ethnicity, gender, occupation, or social style, then you’ve built a language-culture of the identity, from your point of view. I have to add “your point of view,” because culture isn’t something that “they” have; it’s something that fills the spaces between you and them, and the nature of that space depends on you as well as them.

3.1 Communication Styles as Frames

The term “communication style” is drawn from the discipline of intercultural communication and understood as a recognizable set of patterns in communication. By necessity, communication styles cannot be considered hard facts; they are rather “loose” (another metaphor) as in the patterns in a piece of art or music, nevertheless, empirical and observable. Patterns, however, also have limits. A painting has the limits of its frame and materials; a piece of music has a limit in a score or a theme as well as the acoustics of the setting; both art and music are limited by the performers’ abilities. The painting or the performance, however, is what communication is all about. (A score without a performance is dead; a
performance without a score is conceivable (ex. Jazz), but without a style it is inconceivable. There must be patterns in any piece of art or music. And a style is recognized on the basis of patterns.

4. Intercultural Communication

Today the world we live in is “a global village” where no nation, group or culture can remain anonymous (Samovar & Porter, 1991). What happens in one part of the world affects all parts of the world. As the world is becoming smaller, we are increasingly interacting with people from many different cultures. While modern technology has made it easier for us to communicate with people anywhere in the world, such interactions can be difficult if we do not know how to deal with people and cultures different from our own. Here are examples of some of the obvious mistakes politicians and businesses have made when it comes to dealing with other languages cultures. Intercultural communication, more precisely then, is defined as the study of communication between people whose “cultural perceptions and symbol systems are distinct enough” to alter their communication (Samovar and Porter, 1997: 70). Samovar and Porter (1997) illustrate the process of how the meaning of a message changes when it is encoded by a person in one culture and decoded by a person in another culture in the context of his or her own cultural background. In some cases, the message may be interpreted to carry a different meaning than was intended. By understanding how people perceive the world, their values and beliefs, we can better understand what they say and can anticipate potential cross-cultural misunderstandings. Let’s now look more closely at what we mean by perceptions, beliefs and values in the intercultural context.

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<th>Perception</th>
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<td>Perception is defined as “the internal process by which we select, organize and interpret information” from the outside world (Klopf &amp; Park, 1982:26). In other words, our perceptions of the world are what we tend to notice, reflect upon and respond to in our environment that is meaningful and significant to us.</td>
<td>Beliefs are the judgments we make about what is true or probable. They are usually linked to objects or events that possess certain characteristics that we believe to be true with or without proof (Samovar &amp; Porter, 1997). For example, we have beliefs about religion (there is a God), events (the meeting was successful), other people (she is friendly) or even about ourselves (I am hard-working). According to Price (2000), most of our beliefs are ideas about how things work, why things are the way they are, and where things come from.</td>
<td>Values are defined as “an enduring set of beliefs that serve to guide or direct our behavior” (Klopf &amp; Park, 1982). They represent the norms of a culture and specify, for instance, what is good or bad, right or wrong, rude or polite, appropriate or inappropriate. In other words, they provide us with a set of rules for behaving, making choices and reducing uncertainty. Like our perceptions and beliefs, values are learned and hence subject to interpretation. When we interpret behavior, an object, or an event, we are applying value judgments, which reflect our particular culture.</td>
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Interactions are most highly intercultural when individuals’ group identities are most salient in determining the values, prejudices, language, nonverbal behaviors, and relational styles upon which those individuals draw. To the degree that interactants are drawing more on personal or idiosyncratic values, personality traits, and experiences, the interaction can be characterized as more interpersonal than intercultural. When individuals from different cultural backgrounds become more intimate, their interactions typically move along the continuum from more intercultural to more interpersonal, though intercultural elements may always play a role. For casual or business communication, sensitivity to intercultural factors is the key to success.
Every communication has a message sender and a message receiver. As shown in Figure 3-1, the sent message is never identical to the received message. Why? Communication is indirect; it is a symbolic behavior. Ideas, feelings, and pieces of information cannot be communicated directly but must be externalized or symbolized before being communicated. Encoding describes the producing of a symbol message. Decoding describes the receiving of a message from a symbol. The message sender must encode his or her meaning into a form that the receiver will recognize—that is, into words and behavior. Receivers must then decode the words and behavior—the symbols—back into messages that have meaning for them. Cross-cultural communication occurs when a person from one culture sends a message to a person from another culture. Cross-cultural miscommunication occurs when the person from the second culture does not receive the sender's intended message. The greater the differences between the sender's and the receiver's cultures, the greater the chance for cross-cultural miscommunication.

5. Different meanings
Like the term ‘Culture’, the term ‘cultural identity’ has many different meanings and just as with ‘culture’ different paradigms prefers certain meanings of the term. Thus we can point at a functionalist based understanding of cultural identity where the goal is to find a national mind, a particular characteristic identity of the population as a whole (Røgilds 1995). Within the humanities the term cultural identity also exists, but with another meaning. That is, a form of identity created by a uniform use of texts and exchange of and use of symbols as parts of identities (Fornäs 1995: 240). From this perspective it is investigated how e.g. young people use and read symbols in fashion magazines etc. Within the constructivist perspective it is a general understanding that cultural identity is a form of social identity constructed in relation to other people in a given period of time. In the process of communication in general, and intercultural communication in particular, for a proper decoding of the messages it is of paramount importance to recognize to what an extent people’s identity contributes to formulate and convey the information.

Cultural identity performances can vary along three dimensions:
1. **Scope of Identity Performance**: how many aspects of one’s behavior express cultural identity? For example, one may choose to eat a few ethnic-related foods, but reject ethnic dress. Or one may allude to national myths or sagas in speaking just with co-nationals, or may tell such stories at diverse occasions among diverse listeners.
2. **Intensity of Identity Performance**: how powerfully does one enact one’s identity? One may note in passing one’s national origin, or one may make a point of proclaiming the centrality of national origin at every opportunity.
3. **Salience of Identity Performance**: how obvious are the cultural elements of identity in one’s daily routines? Ethnic dress, insistence on using one’s first language over the host national language, or reliance solely on ethnic mass media are all ways in which one asserts identity (Collier & Thomas, 1988).

5.1 Types of Identity
Each person has multiple dimensions of identities, usually depending on the nature of the social interaction. The sources of identity range as follows (Huntington, 2004, 27):
- Ascriptive (age, ancestry, gender, kin (blood relatives), ethnicity (extended kin), race); Cultural (clan, tribe, ethnicity (way of life), language, nationality, religion, Civilization); Territorial (neighborhood, settlement, country, geographical area, hemisphere, etc.);
- Political (faction, clique, leader, interest group, movement, party, ideology, state, etc.);
- Economic (job, occupation, profession, work group, employer, industry, economic sector, labor union, class);
- Social (friends, club, team, colleagues, leisure group, status).
6. Awareness in Intercultural Communication

The ways that others regard you and communicate with you are influenced largely by whom they perceive you to be. By enacting cultural characteristics of masculinity or femininity, for example, you may elicit particular reactions from others. Reflect on your social and individual characteristics; consider how these characteristics communicate something about you.

Our world is run by money. The only way to be able to gain power in the world is through your economic status. A major part of gaining economic status is to be able to negotiate and do business with people of different cultures. The technology available in this age simplifies the task.

The study of intercultural communication begins as a journey into another culture and reality and ends as a journey into one’s own culture. Self-awareness, then, that comes through intercultural learning may involve an increased awareness of being caught up in political, economic, and historical systems not of our own making. Intercultural communication research has by definition been related to the understanding of national cultures as the fundamental principle. Cultures were nations. Apart from the curiosity that most intercultural readers began with a short passage telling that sometimes people inside a nation could be more different from each other than people across cultures (Samovar, Porter & Jain 1981), the whole idea of intercultural communication was linked to national culture. The globalization process, in which we are all, getting closer and closer to each other by consumerism, ideology and knowledge about each other. b) The localization process, which makes us focus intensively at our local nation or local ethnic group (Featherstone 1990, Hylland Eriksen 1993). Jonathan Friedman suggests that there is nothing new. He argues that the mobility, which is seen as central to globalization, primarily applies to the elite (Friedman 1994: 23). It’s often argued that there is no difference between intercultural communication and other kinds of communication (Gudykunst 1994, Sarbaugh 1979). However in multiethnic societies, one of the differences is exactly that in intercultural communication it is a legal discourse to discuss who of the participants in a communication process ‘really’ belongs to the majority culture. Intercultural communication in a globalize world is forced to take that circumstance into account and include questions of globalization and cultural identity.

7. Cultural Presuppositions

‘Cultural presuppositions’ refers to knowledge, experience, feelings and opinions we have towards categories of people that we do not regard as members of the cultural communities that we identify ourselves with. ‘Cultural presuppositions’ is also inspired by Gadamer’s work. The aim of this analytical tool originates from my interest in finding a term for ‘understanding across cultural communities’. I found a piece of the answer in Gadamer’s simplified doctrine: “All understanding is a matter of presuppositions” (Bukhdal 1967). No matter what kind of knowledge we have about other groups, no matter how lacking and prejudiced it is, this knowledge is the basis for the interpretations we make. Cultural presuppositions are a very simple but practical tool to be aware of the discourses and discursive formations in everyday life. At the everyday level it’s a help to be aware of how e.g. a client is categorizing ‘others’. Intercultural communication is normally related to misunderstanding and conflicts – although most of all intercultural communication is without any problems (Jandt 1995).

8. THEORIES OF INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

8.1 Anxiety Uncertainty Management Theory (William B. Gudykunst, 1985)

Intercultural encounters are characterized by high levels of uncertainty and anxiety, especially when cultural variability is high. Effective communication is made possible by our ability to mindfully manage our anxiety and reduce our uncertainty about ourselves and the people with whom we are communicating, (Griffin, p. 496).
8.2 Cross Cultural Theory (Young Kim, 1977)
The idea that immigrants and aliens in foreign countries who participated in networks of the host country would be more likely to become acculturated than immigrants who were involved only in immigrant communication networks. Infante et al 1997

6.3 Cultural Critical Theory (Stuart Hall, 1979)
The CCS theory states that the mass media impose the dominant ideology on the rest of society, and the connotations of words and images are fragments of ideology that perform an unwitting service for the ruling elite.

8.4 Face Negotiation (Stella Ting-Toomey, 1985)
Members of collectivist, high-context cultures have concerns for mutual face and inclusion that lead them to manage conflict with another person by avoiding, obliging, or compromising. Because of concerns for self-face and autonomy, people from individualistic, low-context cultures manage conflict by dominating or through problem solving" (Griffin, p. 496).

8.5 Genderlect Deborah Tannen, 1984
Male-female conversation is cross-cultural communication. Masculine and feminine styles of discourse are best viewed as two distinct cultural dialects rather than as inferior or superior ways of speaking. Men's report talk focuses on status and independence. Women's support talk seeks human connection (Griffin, p. 497).

8.6 Marxism (1984)
Marxism (1984) is a theory based on Dialectical Materialism, which aims at explaining class struggle and the basis of social relations through economics.

8.7 Meaning of Meaning (I. A. Richards, 1936)
Misunderstanding takes place when people assume a word has a direct connection with its referent. Words don't mean; people mean. A common past reduces misunderstanding. Definition, metaphor, feedforward, and Basic English are partial linguistic remedies for a lack of shared experience. (Griffin, p. 492)

8.9 Muted Group (Chris Kramarae, n/a)
Women and members of other subordinate groups are not as free or able as men to say what they wish because their words have been formulated and translated by a male-dominated style of communication.

8.10 Non Verbal Typologies (Paul Ekman and Wallace Friesen, 1969)
The body's non-verbal movements in relation to every aspect of communication

8.11 Standpoint (Sandra Harding and Julia T. Wood, 1982)
Individual experiences, knowledge, and communication behaviors are shaped in large part by the social groups to which they belong.

8.12 Stranger (William Gudykunst, 1985)
At least one of the persons in an intercultural encounter is a stranger. Strangers are “hyperaware” of cultural differences and tend to overestimate the effect of cultural identity on the behavior of people in an alien society, while blurring individual distinctions.

8.13 Information Systems Approach (KarlWeick , 1969)
Weick uses General Systems Theory to explain the interconnectedness of individuals in an organization. Organizing uses the process of enactment, selection, and retention. People working in loosely coupled systems utilize the double interact to reduce equivocality and make sense of the information they receive from others in order to accomplish goals.

8.14 Cultural Approach to Organizations (Clifford Geertz & Michael Pacanowsky, 1973)
Geertz and Pacanowsky describe organizations as having their own culture. This means that any given organization has a particular culture in which the meanings for things are shared between individuals. This symbolic interactionist approach is influenced by the East, and Japanese companies that have moved into the West. The environment that surrounds each company is called the corporate culture and consists of the organization's image, character, and climate. The culture is learned through the use of Stories (or metaphors) used to convey the messages the corporation wants to share with its employees. There are three types of stories told: Corporate stories, information which the management wants to share with the employees; Personal stories, which include personal accounts of themselves that
employees share with each other to help to define who they are within the organization; and Collegial stories, which are stories (positive or negative) that employees within an organization tell about each other. Using the scientific method of ethnography, we can learn to understand the rituals of a given culture of an organization.

9. Immigration & the Social Landscape

These shifts in patterns of immigration have resulted in a much more racially and ethnically diverse population. Sometimes more heterogeneous cultures are contrasted to more homogeneous cultures. Instead of thinking of cultures as either heterogeneous or homogeneous, it is more useful to think about cultures as more or less heterogeneous (or more or less homogeneous). Cultures can change over time and become more or less homogeneous. They can also be more heterogeneous than another culture. This heterogeneity presents many opportunities and challenges for students of intercultural communication. The tensions among heterogeneous groups, as well as fears on the part of the politically dominant groups, must be acknowledged. Diversity can expand our conceptions of what is possible linguistically, politically, and socially as various lifestyles and ways of thinking converge. However, increased opportunity does not always lead to increased interaction. Most Americans are reluctant to admit that a class structure exists and even more reluctant to admit how difficult it is to move up in this structure. Indeed, most people live their lives in the same economic class into which they were born. And there are distinct class differences in clothing, housing, recreation, conversation, and other aspects of everyday life (Fussell, 1992).

10. IMPACT OF TECHNOLOGY

The impact of technology on our everyday communication is staggering. Think of how often you use technology to communicate in any given day: You may text-message friends about evening plans, e-mail your family to tell them the latest news, participate in a discussion board for one of your courses, and check your cell phone Web site to see how many more minutes you can use this month without getting charged. You may have found that the Internet provides access to information about other cultures and other peoples. We can now instantaneously find out almost anything about any group in the world simply by searching the Internet. This should give us a better understanding of our global neighbors and perhaps some motivation to coexist peacefully in our global village; however, the evidence seems to be to the contrary.

Communication technology brings us in contact with people we might never have the opportunity to know otherwise. And many of these people are from different cultural backgrounds. The Internet/e-mail allows us to have “pen pals” from different cultures and to carry on discussions with these people in virtual chat rooms and on discussion boards. When we are talking to individuals face-to-face, we use nonverbal information to help us interpret what they are really saying—tone of voice, facial expressions, gestures, and so on. The absence of these cues in mediated contexts (e.g., e-mail, chat rooms) makes communication more difficult and can lead to misunderstandings. And these misunderstandings can be compounded when communicating across cultures.

11. THE PEACE IMPERATIVE

Consider the ethnic/religious strife between Muslims and the Western world; the ethnic struggles in Bosnia and the former Soviet Union; the war between Hutus and Tutsis in Rwanda (Africa); the continued unrest in the Middle East; and the racial and ethnic struggles and tensions in neighborhoods in Boston, Los Angeles, and other U.S. cities. Some of these conflicts are tied to histories of colonialism around the world, whereby European powers lumped diverse groups differing in language, culture, religion, or identity together as one state. For example, the division of Pakistan and India was imposed by the British; eventually, East Pakistan declared its independence to become Bangladesh. Nevertheless, ethnic and religious differences in some areas of India and Pakistan continue to cause unrest. And the
acquisition of nuclear weapons by both India and Pakistan makes these antagonisms of increasing concern. The tremendous diversity and accompanying antagonisms within many former colonies must be understood in the context of histories of colonialism. These are difficult issues for many people searching for ethical guidelines (Johannesen, 1990). The philosopher Immanuel Kant (1949) believed in the universality of moral laws. His well-known “categorical imperative” states that people should act only on maxims that apply universally, to all individuals.

12. CONCLUSION

Language use plays an important role in intercultural communication. Intercultural communication involves far more than merely language, but language clearly cannot be overlooked as a central element in the process. This chapter focuses on the verbal aspects of intercultural communication; the next chapter focuses on the nonverbal elements. However, some cultural groups prefer a more indirect style, with the emphasis on high-context communication. Preserving the harmony of relationships has a higher priority than being totally honest. Thus, a speaker might look for a “soft” way to communicate that there is a problem in the relationship, perhaps by providing contextual cues (Ueda, 1974). Different communication styles are responsible for many problems that arise between men and women and between persons from different ethnic groups. These problems may be caused by different priorities for truth, honesty, harmony, and conflict avoidance in relationships. The exact style falls between the elaborate and the understated, as expressed in the maxim “Verbal contributions should be no more or less information than is required” (Grice, 1975). The exact style emphasizes cooperative communication and sincerity as a basis for interaction. In international negotiations, visible differences in style can contribute to misperceptions and misunderstandings. Understanding some of the cultural variations in communication style is useful. A dialectical perspective reminds us that the particular style we use may vary from context to context. The languages we speak and the languages others think we should speak can create barriers in intercultural communication.

Nonverbal elements of cultural communication are highly dynamic and play an important role in understanding intercultural communication. Consider misunderstandings based on differing expectations for spatial distance. Both verbal and nonverbal communication is symbolic, communicates meaning, and is patterned that is, they are governed by contextually determined rules. Many cross-cultural studies support the notion of some universality in nonverbal communication, particularly in facial expressions. Several facial gestures seem to be universal, including the eyebrow flash just described, the nose wrinkle (indicating slight social distancing), and the “disgust face” (a strong sign of social repulsion). It is also possible that grooming behavior is universal (as it is in animals), although it seems to be somewhat suppressed in Western societies (Schiefenhovel, 1997). Recent findings indicate that at least six basic emotions—including happiness, sadness, disgust, fear, anger, and surprise are communicated by similar facial expressions in most societies. Expressions for these emotions are recognized by most cultural groups as having the same meaning (Ekman, 2003; Matsumoto, Franklin, Choi, Rogers, & Tatani, 2002). The immigrants may be simultaneously accepted and rejected, privileged and disadvantaged, and relationships may be both static and dynamic. These relationships have implications for intercultural communication. The individual does not want to maintain an isolated cultural identity but wants to maintain relationships with other groups in the new culture. The migrant is more or less welcomed by the new cultural hosts. Marginalization has come to describe, more generally, individuals who live on the margin of a culture, not able to participate fully in its political and social life as a result of cultural differences.

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