

Bank of Lecture

Intercultural communication

## **Lecture 1: A theoretical approach to intercultural communication**

When does communication become intercultural communication? What distinguishes intercultural communication from communication that is not intercultural? What does it mean to be a competent intercultural communicator? I believe that intercultural communication can be understood via the same basic variables and processes used to describe other forms of communication. All communication occurs between people who have varying degree of familiarity with each other. The key factor of understanding intercultural communication is the concept of the stranger. Different cultures (and subcultures) may have different rules and norms in accordance to which I would point out that understanding the other's culture facilitates cross-cultural communication. Attention is to be focused on the components and characteristics of intercultural communication competence as well as boundaries and common understandings about this central idea are to be established.

### **Understanding communication**

Strangeness and familiarity make up a continuum. As for William Gudykunst and Young Yun Kim the term "stranger" is to refer to those people at the most unfamiliar end of continuum.<sup>1</sup> Thus anyone could be considered a stranger, given a sufficiently foreign context. A stranger has limited knowledge of their new environment – of its norms and values. And in turn, the locals have little knowledge of the stranger – of their beliefs, interests and habits. Generally speaking, communication with another involves predicting or anticipating their responses. When communicating with someone familiar we are usually confident in our anticipation, and may not even notice that we are making such predictions. In contrast, when we communicate with strangers we are more aware of the range of their possible responses, and of the uncertainty of our predictions. Communicative predictions are based on data from three levels. First is the cultural level. This level involves information about the other's culture, its dominant values and

norms. This level involves information available when communicating with a stranger. Even so, a better understanding of the stranger's culture yields better predictions.

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## **Lecture 2: A theoretical approach to intercultural communication**

The second level of information is sociocultural. This includes data about the other's group membership, or the groups to which they seek to belong. This type of information is the predominate data used in intracultural communication. Finally there is psychocultural data. This information is about the individual's characteristics, and is the sort of data most relevant to communication with friends. We understand such data by the process of social cognition. Social cognition is a dialectical process which involves both grouping particulars into categories based on their similarities and of distinguishing individuals from their categories based on their differences. To improve communication with strangers we must pay attention to their unique, individual features. Gudykunst and Kim argue that effective communication with strangers requires an increased awareness of our communication behaviours. First, we tend to categorise things automatically, and so we are less aware of doing it. It takes more of our conscious awareness to differentiate particular individuals from their stereotypical categories.

Second, much of our daily communication follows familiar scripts, and so we are not consciously aware of that communication behaviour. We cannot rely on such familiar scripts and norms when communicating with strangers. Our communication will be improved if we recognise that familiar scripts do not apply, and seek to modify our communication behaviours accordingly. In addition, we need to point out the importance of personal and social communication which are best characterised by Young Kim, in her model.

1. Personal communication refers to the individual's host communication competence; that is the degree to which the stranger can encode and decode verbal and nonverbal messages within the host environment.
2. Host communication competence also refers to the degree to which the stranger understands the host's language rules and norms, understands effective and appropriate conflict resolution strategies, and is motivated to initiate and develop host culture relationships.
3. Social communication refers to the actual interaction between stranger and host persons. The actual participation in relationships,

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engaging in conflict resolution, and exposing oneself to the mass communication of the host culture can enhance and facilitate the acculturation process.

## **Lecture 3: Guidelines to characteristics of other cultures**

When one asks "How can I learn about culture X?", all too often we are discouraged to learn that there is no comprehensive book (or list) available on culture X. The lack of reading matter on various cultures is, in some ways, a blessing, since knowledge of other cultures is better acquired by experience than by study. Thus, ones in foreign mission should plan to experience cultures different from their own, particularly the cultures represented in their mission or posts. To be valid, these experiences should incorporate a few basic principles and discovery techniques.

By discovering the characteristics of other cultures, it should be noted that cultures vary internally and are changeable. There are usually many cultural differences within a single race or nationality. The following principles may be useful to keep in mind:

- Firsthand experience is necessary to understand many subtleties of any culture.
- Feelings of apprehension, loneliness or lack of confidence are common when visiting and experiencing another culture.
- Differences between cultures are often experienced as threatening.
- What is logical and important in a particular culture may seem irrational and unimportant to an outsider.
- In describing another culture, people tend to stress the differences and overlook the similarities.
- Stereotyping due to generalizing may be inevitable among those who lack frequent contact with another culture.
- Personal observations of others about another culture should be regarded with skepticism.
- Many cultures often exist within a single race, language group, religion or nationality, differentiated by age, gender, socioeconomic status, education and exposure to other cultures.
- All cultures have internal variations.
- Cultural awareness varies among individuals.
  - One's own sense of cultural identity often is not evident until one encounters another culture.

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- Cultures are continually evolving.
  - Understanding another culture is a continuous process.
  - One should understand the language of a culture to best understand that culture.
- An understanding of these principles would certainly support to become a more insightful observer of other cultures.

### **Lecture 3: The components of intercultural competence**

Intercultural communication competence is the degree to which you effectively adapt your verbal and nonverbal messages to the appropriate cultural context.

CONTEXT. Intercultural competence is contextual. An impression or judgment that a person is intercultural competent is made with respect to both a specific relational context and a particular situational context. Competence is not independent of the relationships and situations within which communication occurs. Thus, competence is not an individual attribute; rather, it is a characteristic of the association between individuals. It is possible, therefore, for someone to be perceived as highly competent in one set of intercultural interactions and only moderately competent in another. Judgments of intercultural competence also depend on cultural expectations about the permitted behaviours that characterise the settings or situations within which people communicate. The settings help to define and limit the range of behaviours that are regarded as acceptable. Consequently, the same set of behaviours may be perceived as very competent in one cultural setting and much less competent in another. For instance, one person might want to use highly personalised nicknames and touching behaviours in public, the other person might regard such visible displays as unwarranted and therefore incompetent.

Many previous attempts to describe intercultural competence have erroneously focused on the traits or individual characteristics that make a person competent.

Individuals have been selected for particular intercultural assignments based solely on such personal attributes as authoritarianism, empathy, self-esteem and world mindedness. As intercultural competence is contextual, these trait approaches have

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been unsuccessful in identifying competent intercultural communicators.

### **Lecture 4: APPROPRIATENESS AND EFFECTIVENESS.**

Intercultural competence requires behaviours that are appropriate and effective. By appropriate we mean those behaviours that are regarded as proper and suitable given the expectations generated by a given culture, the constraints of the specific situation, and the nature of the relationship between the interactants. By effective we mean those behaviours that lead to the achievement of desired outcomes.

#### **KNOWLEDGE, MOTIVATIONS, AND ACTIONS.**

Intercultural competence requires sufficient knowledge, suitable motivations and skilled actions. Each of these components alone is insufficient to achieve intercultural competence.

**Knowledge:** It refers to the cognitive information about the people, the context, and the norms of appropriateness that operate in specific culture. Without such knowledge, it is unlikely that one can interpret correctly the meanings of other people's messages, nor will one be able to select behaviours that are appropriate and that allow them to achieve the objectives. The kinds of knowledge that are important include culture general and culture-specific information. The former provides insights into the intercultural communication process abstractly and can therefore be a very powerful tool in making sense of cultural practices, regardless of the cultures involved. The latter is used to

understand a particular culture. Such knowledge should include information about the forces that maintain the culture's uniqueness and facts about the cultural patterns that predominate. An additional – and crucial – form of culture-specific knowledge involves information about the specific customs that govern interpersonal communication in the culture. Often overlooked is knowledge of one's own cultural system. Yet the ability to attain intercultural competence may be very closely linked to this kind of knowledge. Knowledge about our own culture will help us to understand another culture.

**Motivations:** Motivations include the overall set of emotional associations that people have as they anticipate and actually

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communicate intercultural. As with knowledge, different aspects of the emotional terrain contribute to the achievement of intercultural competence. Human emotional reactions include both feelings and intentions.

Feelings refer to the emotional or affective states that are experienced when communicating with someone from a different culture. Feelings are not thoughts, though the two are often confused; rather, feelings are one's emotional and physiological reactions to thoughts and experiences. Feelings of happiness, sadness, eagerness, anger, tension, surprise, confusion, relaxation, and joy are among the many emotions that can accompany the intercultural communication experience. Feelings also involve the general sensitivity to other cultures and attitudes toward the specific culture and individuals with whom we must interact. Intentions are what guide choices in a particular intercultural interaction. The intentions are the goals, plans, objectives, and desires that focus and direct behaviour. Intentions are

often affected by the stereotypes we have of people from other cultures because stereotypes reduce the number of choices and interpretations we are willing to consider.

**Actions:** Finally, actions refer to the actual performance of those behaviours that are regarded as appropriate and effective. Thus, you can have the necessary information, be motivated by the appropriate feelings and intentions, and still lack the behavioural skills necessary to achieve competence.6

### **Lecture 5: Variables in intercultural communication modules**

The challenge is that even with all the good will, miscommunication is likely to happen, especially when there are significant cultural differences between communicators. Miscommunication may lead to conflict, or aggravate conflict that already exists. We make quite different meaning of the world, our places in it, and our relationships with others. In accordance to this, intercultural communication can be demonstrated by examples of ideas, attitudes, and behaviours involving four variables:

- Time and Space
  - Fate and Personal Responsibility

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- Face and Face-Saving
- Nonverbal Communication

As our familiarity with these different starting points increases, we are cultivating cultural fluency – awareness of the ways cultures operate in communication and conflict, and the ability to respond effectively to these differences.

#### **Time and Space**

Time is one of the most central differences that separate cultures and cultural ways of doing things. In the West, time tends to be seen as quantitative, measured in units that reflect the march of progress. It is logical, sequential, and present-focused. Novinger calls the United States, for instance, a “chronocracy”, in which there is such reverence for efficiency and the success of economic endeavours that the expression “time is money” is frequently heard. This approach to time is called monochronic – it is an approach that favours linear structure and focus on one event or interaction at a time. In the East, time feels like it has unlimited continuity, an unravelling rather than a strict boundary. Birth and death are not such absolute ends since the universe continues and humans, though changing form, continue as part of it. People may attend to many things happening at once in this approach to time called polychronous. This may mean many conversations in a moment (people speak simultaneously), or many times and people during one process (a ceremony in which those family members who have died are felt to be present as well as those yet to be born into the family). A good place to look to understand the Eastern idea of time is India.

Differences over time can play out in painful and dramatic ways in negotiation or conflict-resolution processes. It is also true that cultural approaches to time or communication are not always applied in good will, but may serve a variety of motives.

Asserting power, superiority, or control over the course of the negotiations may be a motive wrapped up in certain cultural behaviours. Culture and cultural beliefs may be used as a tactic by negotiators; for this reason, it is important that parties be involved in collaborative-process design when addressing intractable conflicts. As people from different cultural backgrounds work together to design a process to address the issues that divide them, they can ask questions about cultural preferences about time and space and how these may

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affect a negotiation or conflict-resolution process, and thus inoculate the use of culture as a tactic or an instrument to advance power. A polychromic perspective is often associated with a communitarian starting point. The focus on collective, or group, stretching forward and back, animates the polychromic view of time. In more monochromic settings, an individualist way of life is more easily accommodated. Individualists can more easily extract moments in time, and individuals themselves, from the networks around them.

### **Lecture 6: Fate and Personal Responsibility**

Another important variable affecting communication across cultures is fate and personal responsibility. This refers to the degree to which we feel ourselves the masters of our lives, versus the degree to which we see ourselves as subject to things outside our control, in other words, how much we see ourselves able to change and maneuver, to choose the course of our lives and relationships.

Some have drawn a parallel between the emphasis on personal responsibility in North American settings and the landscape itself. The North American landscape is vast, with large spaces of unpopulated territory. The frontier mentality of “conquering” the wilderness, and the expansiveness of the land stretching huge distances, may relate to generally high levels of confidence in the ability to shape and choose our destinies.

Now consider places in the world with much smaller territory, whose history reflects repeated conquest and harsh struggles: Northern Ireland, Mexico, Israel, Palestine. In these places, there is more emphasis on destiny’s role in human life. Their fatalistic attitude is expressed in their way of responding to failure or accident by saying “ni modo” (“no way” or “tough luck”), meaning that the setback was destined.

This variable is important to understanding cultural conflict. If someone invested in free will crosses paths with someone more fatalistic in orientation, miscommunication is likely. The former may expect action and accountability. Failing to see it, they may conclude that the other is lazy, obstructionist, or dishonest. The second person will expect respect for the natural order of things. Failing to see it, they may conclude that the first is coercive or irreverent, inflated in his ideas of what can be accomplished or changed.

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### **Face and Face-Saving**

Face is important across cultures, yet the dynamics of face and face-saving play out differently. Face is defined in many different ways. Novinger says it is “the value or standing a person has in the eyes of others...and that it relates to pride or self-respect.” Others have defined it as “the negotiated public image, mutually granted each other by participants in [communication].”<sup>10</sup> In this broader definition, face includes ideas of status, power, courtesy, insider and outsider relations, humour and respect. In many cultures, maintaining face is of great importance, though ideas of how to do this vary. If I see myself as a self-determining individual, then face has to do with preserving my image with others and myself. I can and should exert control in situations to achieve this goal. I may be comfortable in a mediation where the other party and I meet face to face and frankly discuss our differences.

If I see my primary identification as a group member, then considerations about face involve my group. Direct confrontation or problem-solving with others may reflect poorly on my group, or disturb overall community harmony. I may prefer to avoid criticism of others, even when the disappointment I have concealed may come out in other, more damaging ways later. When there is conflict that cannot be avoided, I may prefer a third party who acts as a shuttle between me and the other people involved in the conflict. Since no direct confrontation takes place, face is preserved and potential damage to the relationships or networks of relationships is minimized.

### **Lecture 7: Nonverbal Communication**

Its importance is multiplied across cultures. This is because we tend to look for nonverbal cues when verbal messages are unclear or ambiguous, as they are more likely to be across cultures (especially when different languages are being used). Since nonverbal behaviour arises from our cultural comm. on sense – our ideas about what is appropriate, normal, and effective as communication in relationships – we use different systems of understanding gestures posture, silence, special relations, emotional expression, touch, physical appearance, and other nonverbal cues. Cultures also attribute different degrees of importance to verbal and nonverbal behaviour.

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Low-context cultures like the United States and Canada tend to give relatively less emphasis to nonverbal communication. This does not mean that nonverbal communication does not happen, or that is unimportant, but that people in these settings tend to place less importance on it than on the literal meanings of words themselves. In high-context settings such as Japan or Latin America, understanding the nonverbal components of communication is relatively more important to receiving the intended meaning of the communication as a whole. Some elements of nonverbal communication are consistent across cultures. For example, research has shown that the emotions of enjoyment, anger, fear, sadness, disgust, and surprise are expressed in similar ways by people around the world. However, differences are also to be recognised. For instance, it may be more socially acceptable in some settings in the West for women to show fear, but not anger, and for men to display anger, but not fear.<sup>13</sup> At the same time, interpretation of facial expressions across cultures is difficult. In the East, for example, a facial expression that

would be recognized around the world as conveying happiness may actually express anger or mask sadness, both of which are unacceptable to show overtly.

## Lecture 7: Intercultural Communication

### Defining Intercultural Communication

Intercultural communication takes place when individuals influenced by different cultural communities negotiate shared meanings in interaction.<sup>1</sup> 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. Other authorities, in contrast, expand the notion of intercultural communication to encompass inter-ethnic, inter-religious, and even inter-regional communication, as well as communication among individuals of different sexual orientations.<sup>3,4</sup> In this sense, all interactions can be arrayed along some continuum of “interculturalness.”<sup>5</sup> 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.

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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 key to success.

## Lecture 8: Intercultural Communication

### Communication and Group Identity

Traditional theories of group identity recognize two types of group identity:

1. **Ascribed identity** is the set of demographic and role descriptions that others in an interaction assume to hold true for you. Ascribed identity is often a function of one’s physical appearance, ethnic connotations of one’s name, or other stereotypical associations.
2. **Avowed identity** is comprised of the group affiliations that one feels most intensely. For example, if an individual is assimilated into a new culture, then the values and practices of that destination culture will figure importantly in her avowed culture. A related concept is **reference group**. A reference group is a social entity from which one draws one’s avowed identity. It is a group in which one feels competent and at ease. Ascribed and avowed identity are important for understanding intercultural communication, because a person from another culture usually communicates with you based on your ascribed identity;

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You are being perceived by that other person. But sometimes your avowed identity—the groups with which you really feel a sense of comfort and affiliation—diverges from that ascribed identity. In such cases, the interaction is bound to be frustrating for both parties.

Recently, many identity theorists have moved toward a

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**Communication Theory of Identity (CTI)** or related ideas. According to this perspective, your cultural group membership is not a static label or fixed attribute. Rather, cultural identities are enacted or performed through interaction. One enacts identity through choice of language, nonverbal signs such as gesture and clothing, and discourse strategy.

Depending on the situation and on your goals, you may enact identity in very different ways on different occasions. 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.

## Lecture 10: Intercultural Communication Competence and Ethnocentrism

What does it mean to be a competent communicator across cultures, and what are the elements or components of that competence? Some authorities link intercultural competence with identity; the competent communicator is the person who can affirm others' avowed identities.<sup>9</sup> Other notions of intercultural competence focus on the communicator's goal attainment; the competent communicator is the person who can convey a sense of communication appropriateness and effectiveness in diverse cultural contexts.

Certainly proficiency in the host culture language is valuable for intercultural competence. But it is not enough to know the grammar

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and vocabulary of that language; the competent communicator will also understand **language pragmatics** like how to use politeness strategies in making requests or how to avoid giving out too much information.<sup>11</sup> Equally important, competent communicators are sensitive to **nonverbal communication** patterns in other cultures.<sup>12</sup> In addition to avoiding insults and gaffes by using gestures that may mean very different things in a host culture as opposed to one's home culture, competent communicators understand how to use (or avoid) touch, proximity in physical space, and paralinguistic sounds to convey their intended meanings.

## Lecture 11: Intercultural Communication

Traits that make for competent intercultural communicators include flexibility and the ability to tolerate high levels of uncertainty, reflectiveness or mindfulness, open-mindedness, sensitivity, adaptability, and the ability to engage in divergent and systems-level thinking. The foundation of intercultural communication competence is the capacity to avoid **ethnocentrism**. Ethnocentrism is the inclination to view one's own group as natural and correct, and all others as aberrant. We tend to think prescriptively, that all groups should behave as our own group behaves. And we are naturally proud of our own group and distrustful of others.<sup>16</sup> Obviously a person who is highly ethnocentric cannot adapt to diverse people, and cannot communicate in an interculturally competent manner.

Some authorities hold that some degree of ethnocentrism is inevitable, and even functional for the preservation of distinct cultural groups. Competent communicators simply learn to suppress their natural ethnocentric reactions in order to better understand others on their own terms.<sup>17</sup> Alternatively, it may be possible for individuals to evolve beyond ethnocentrism, to become ethnorelativistic.

The Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity<sup>18</sup> is frequently used in intercultural training and assessment to

chart individuals' progress toward ethnorelativism. The model posits six stages:

1. Denial—The individual refuses to acknowledge cultural differences.
2. Defense—The individual begins to see cultural differences and is threatened by them.
3. Minimization—While individuals at this stage do acknowledge

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cultural differences, they see human universals as more salient than cultural distinctions.

4. Acceptance—The individual begins to accept significant cultural differences first in behaviors, and then in values.
5. Adaptation—The individual becomes more adept at intercultural communication by shifting perspectives to the other's cultural world view.
6. Integration—Individuals at this stage begin to transcend their own native cultures. They define their identities and evaluate their actions in terms of multiple cultural perspectives.

## Lecture 12: Communicating Across Diverse World Views and Values

To communicate competently across cultures, individuals must understand some of the ways in which cultures diverge in their world views. The pioneer in pointing out the practical implications of differing world views was the anthropologist Edward Hall. For example, Hall explained that some cultures are **monochronic**.

They regard time as segmentable, an almost tangible commodity. Monochronic cultures value schedules and can evolve efficient bureaucracies. **Polychronic** cultures, on the other hand, regard events as embedded in more of a simultaneous matrix of occurrences. Little value is placed on demarcating work time as opposed to socialization time, for instance. People in polychronic cultures are little concerned with promptness or deadlines.

## Lecture 13: Intercultural Communication

The most frequently utilized taxonomy of cultural world views in intercultural communication studies was developed originally by surveying employees in 50 nations (and later supplemented with additional data). In this taxonomy, cultures can be arrayed along five dimensions:

- Individualism/Collectivism—Are individuals defined by their unique attributes or by their group memberships? Is individual achievement and gratification most important, or is group harmony?

- **Uncertainty Avoidance**—Is it preferable to tread well-known traditional paths, or is risk taking and experimentation prized?

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- **Power-Distance**—Should status differences be kept to a minimum, or are strict social hierarchies preferred?
- **Masculine/Feminine**—Does the culture cultivate competition or cooperation? Acquisitiveness or sharing?
- **Short-Term Orientation/Long-Term Orientation** (also known as Confucian Dynamism)—Are immediate outcomes and personal dignity most important, or should long-term perspectives and social order be emphasized?

Of these six dimensions, **collectivism/individualism** receives the greatest attention. Sometimes the gulf between the two orientations seems immense. While individualists are most concerned with doing what must be done to succeed at a task, collectivists may be attuned to avoiding conflict and assuring harmony.

While individualists believe in direct and honest talk, collectivists may choose to communicate indirectly, through metaphor or through an intermediary, in order to avoid losing face oneself or causing others to do the same. Because collectivist thought is literally so foreign to many Westerners, researchers have promulgated a set of **recommendations for individualists interacting with collectivists**.

- Recognize that collectivists pay attention to group memberships and predict behavior thereby.
- Recognize that collectivists change their behaviors when they change group membership.
- Don't force equality of status—vertical hierarchies are ok.
- Avoid overt competition—emphasize harmony and cooperation instead.
- Avoid threatening another person's "face"—help them save face when necessary.
- Recognize that collectivists do not separate criticism of an idea or action from criticism of the person.
- Avoid overt confrontation—use a strategy of indirection—or just let go of the conflict.
- Cultivate long-term relationships.
- Behave more formally than usual in initial interactions.
- Follow the collectivists' lead in self disclosure.

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### Lecture 14: Culture Shock and Adaptation

Culture shock is a common stress reaction that individuals have when they find themselves immersed in an unfamiliar culture.<sup>22</sup> One's sense of identity as a mature and efficacious adult can be severely challenged when one can't even figure out how to pay bus fare in a foreign transit system. For relatively short-term sojourners in a new culture—for example exchange students, aid workers, or corporate executives on temporary assignment—the pattern of adjusting to a new culture often follows a predictable pattern from elation to depression to adjustment.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, when the sojourn comes to an end, returnees often experience **re-entry shock** when they return home.<sup>24</sup> Overall, sojourners may expect to traverse through seven stages:

1. **Honeymoon**—Newcomers are elated about all the exotic sights and experiences and by the friendliness with which they are greeted.
2. **Hostility**—As the welcome wears thin and more quotidian tasks are expected of the sojourner, disorientation and frustration set in. Those lacking in communication skills may either abort their visit or else retreat into isolation.
3. **Humor**—Sojourners are able to see their various challenges and faux pas in perspective.
4. **In-Sync**—Having achieved a sense of comfort and competence in their host culture, sojourners may even serve as mentors for other newcomers.
5. **Ambivalence**—As the end of their sojourn approaches, individuals are torn between the joy of an anticipated homecoming and the disappointment of seeing their overseas adventure coming to an end.
6. **Re-entry Culture Shock**—The sojourner is shocked by the lack of interest and support among those who remained behind in the home culture. Often, the stress of re-entry may exceed the original stress of encountering the host culture.
7. **Resocialization**—As individuals adjust to being back in their home cultures, three patterns are common.

**Assimilators** try to fit back into old patterns and forget that they had ever experienced another culture.

**Alienators** are never quite satisfied with what they find at home. They may feel restless until they can accept another overseas assignment.

**Transformers** are change agents who use their recently acquired

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intercultural knowledge to help vitalize their home relationships and organizations.

### Lecture 15: Culture Shock and Adaptation



For immigrants, refugees, or émigrés, the long-term counterpart of culture shock is acculturation or adaptation. For them, there is to be no re-entry to their home cultures. Communication plays a key role in the adjustment of these individuals to their new home culture.<sup>26</sup> Important communication components that will determine the quality of cross-cultural adaptation include (a) a critical mass of same-culture immigrants to provide community support and mass media, (b) the receptivity of the host culture to non-native populations, and (c) opportunities for immigrants and refugees to participate in interpersonal interaction with host nationals. If these communication factors are absent or out of balance, there is a danger that immigrants or refugees may either lose their native cultural identities and assimilate, or that they may isolate themselves from their host culture and fail to participate fully. The goal of communication for adaptation is the establishment of integrated bi-cultural (or multi-cultural) identity.

## **Lecture 16: WHAT IS COMMUNICATION?**

Communication is a learned skill. However, while most people are born with the physical ability to talk, not all can communicate well unless they make special efforts to develop and refine this skill further. Very often, we take the ease with which we communicate with each other for granted, so much so that we sometimes forget how complex the communication process actually is.

### **Topic**

#### **1**

□ Introduction to Communication

By the end of this topic, you should be able to:

1. Explain what is meant by the word „communication% in general;
2. Identify the main elements in the communication process;
3. Differentiate between oral and written communication;
4. Highlight some basic tips on writing; and

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5. List the common pitfalls to avoid in written communication.

### **LEARNING OUTCOMES**

Topic 1 Introduction To Communication

#### **Elements in Communication**

Have you ever wondered why some people can communicate so well while others fail to get their message across? What are the elements that must be present in the communication process before it can be successful and effective?

Well, communication has been defined as the act of giving, receiving or exchanging information, ideas and opinions so that the „message% is completely understood by both parties. Look at Figure 1.1 below. The illustration shows clearly that in a communication process, there must be a sender who speaks or sends a message, and a receiver who listens or receives the message.

Figure 1.1: The communication process The sender sends a message with a certain intention in mind. The receiver of the message tries to understand and interpret the message sent. He then gives feedback to the original sender, who in turn interprets the feedback. This process, repeated continuously, constitutes communication.

Clearly, there are several major elements in the communication process a sender, message, channel, receiver, feedback, context. There is both a speakers intention to convey a message and a listenerEs reception of what has been said.

Thus, listening skills are just as important as speaking skills in order for communication to be effective.

This means that if you want to get your message across accurately, you need to consider these three things:

- The message;
- The audience or receiver; and
- How the message is likely to be received.

## **Lecture 17: Topic 1 Introduction To Communication**

A message is only considered successfully communicated when both the sender and the receiver perceive and understand it in the same way. If this does not happen, then there may be a breakdown in communication, which may ultimately stand in the way of you realising your goals, either personally or professionally.

### **Factors Affecting Communication**

As mentioned earlier, effective communication is a two-way process but there are a number of factors which may disrupt this process and affect the overall interpretation and understanding of what was communicated. Myriad problems can pop up at different stages of the communication process. These can relate to any of the elements involved □ the sender, message, channel, receiver, feedback and context. It is therefore important to understand some of the factors that affect communication so that you can try to get your message across with minimal misunderstanding and confusion.

Below are some possible problem areas that may turn out to be barriers to effective communication:

(a) Status/Role

The sender and receiver of a message may be of equal status within a hierarchy (e.g. managers in an organisation) or they may be at different levels (e.g. manager/employee, lecturer/student, business owner/clients). This difference in status sometimes affects the effectiveness of the communication process.

(b) Cultural Differences

Cultural differences, both within or outside the organisation (for example, inter-departmental dealings and communication with outside organisations or ethnic minorities) may impede the communication process.

**ACTIVITY 1.1**

The meaning of communication lies in the way that it is received. Do you agree with the above statement? Discuss with your friends during the next tutorial session.

### **Lecture 18: Choice of Communication Channels**

Before you choose your communication channel, you should ask yourself whether the channel is appropriate for a particular purpose and the person/receiver you have in mind. Sending messages via inappropriate channels can send out wrong signals and end up creating confusion.

(d) Length of Communication

The length of the message also affects the communication process. You need to be sure that it serves the purpose and is appropriate for the receiver. Is the message too long or too brief?

(e) Use of Language

Poor choice of words or weak sentence structure also hampers communication. The same goes for inappropriate punctuation. The two sentences below illustrate clearly how different placement of punctuation can change the entire meaning of a sentence:

(f) Disabilities

Disabilities such as impaired sight, dyslexia and poor mental health can also be barriers to good communication, and should be taken into consideration when evaluating the effectiveness of the communication process. You may need to use hearing aids, sign language, magnifying systems, and symbols to alleviate problems caused by disabilities.

(g) Known or Unknown Receiver

Whether the receiver is known or unknown to you also plays a major role in determining the effectiveness of your communication. A known receiver may be better able to understand your message despite having insufficient information as both of you probably have common experiences and a shared schemata. An unknown receiver, on the other hand, may require more information and time to decode the message.

(h) Individual Perceptions/Attitudes/Personalities Sometimes, the method of communication needs to take into consideration the receivers personality traits, age and preferred style. The elderly and children, for example, have different communication needs and preferences when compared to young adults. Is the receiver of your message a visual, auditory, or kinesthetic sort of person? How do you think they will react to your message? Can you adapt your communication style to suit theirs?

Woman, without her, man is nothing.

### **Lecture 19: Atmosphere/Noise/Distraction**

Our surroundings can sometimes pose as barriers to effective communication. A noisy place (a party, for instance) usually puts a strain on oral communication as both the sender and the receiver need to put extra effort to get the message across and ensure that it is understood clearly and correctly.

(j) Clarity of Message

Is the message conveyed in a clear or ambiguous manner?

(k) Lack of Feedback

Feedback is important as it enables confirmation of understanding to be made by both parties. The lack of feedback can sometimes create problems as it can lead to uncertainty and confusion.

When choosing the most appropriate channel of communication, you should heed the following:

(a) Consider all aspects of the communication process (interpretation, understanding, feedback).

(b) Think carefully about possible barriers.

(c) Evaluate the complexity of the message and decide how it might be best conveyed.

(d) Ask yourself these questions:

- Who? □ Characteristics of the receiver(s).
- Why? □ Purpose of the communication.
- What? □ Content of the message.
- How? □ Oral, written, visual or a combination of all three.
- Where? □ Location of the meeting.
- When? □ Timing/time limit/expected response time.

### **ACTIVITY 1.2**

Your father is not keen on your decision to study medicine in the United Kingdom. How can you persuade him, bearing in mind the barriers to communication that you might encounter?

Determine whether you are meeting or writing to the people concerned. Is the communication via face-to-face interaction, telephone, letter, e-mail, memo or a report?

Decisions about the most appropriate channel of communication also depend on factors such as cost, time, confidentiality, convention, urgency and whether written documentation is required.

## **Lecture 20: Defining Written Communication**

As mentioned earlier, communication can be oral or in written form. What is the difference between these two main types of communication? Oral communication involves conveying ideas, thoughts or information via a spoken language. In written communication, however, information is exchanged using written symbols, that is, via words and sentences. Written communication is the sharing and exchanging of written symbols between individuals or groups.

It is also the presentation of ideas in a coherent manner in written form.

Written communication can take place via:

- Letters;
- Faxes;
- Email;
- Reports;
- Memos; and
- Advertisements.

You can acquire good writing skills through extensive reading, note-taking and listening. In order to communicate effectively via writing, you need to have a sound grounding in grammar and vocabulary so that you can present ideas, together with supporting details, in a unified and coherent manner.

### **WHY WRITTEN COMMUNICATION?**

The next question that arises is: „Why do we need to communicate in written form? Why is there a need to document our work or keep written records?% The answers to these questions are many and varied. For one thing, once you put something into writing, the message is there for posterity, so that others can read it again and again, whenever they like. This is especially useful for research purposes where you need to build up on existing pools of knowledge.

Writing also means that information can be stored and transferred from individual to individual and group to group without relying on memory. Through the written word, records can exist independently of the writer. The written document also helps you to keep abreast of development in whatever project you are involved in as it provides an avenue not only for the sharing of ideas or opinions, but also for the presenting and defending of viewpoints.

Written communication can also serve as a form of acknowledgement proof that something has been done in case verification is needed later.

Sometimes, documenting work helps to clarify thoughts and thinking processes as it allows you to mull over things slowly, at your own pace. It is „thinking made public. So, what must be documented? Any idea, logic, argument or phraseology derived from an outside source must be documented. In academic writing, you must give credit for all borrowed materials, for example, quotations, references, information from primary and secondary sources, facts, data, statistics, opinions,

ideas and interpretations which you have gathered from your reading and research.

Such material must be acknowledged and cited, irrespective of whether you have paraphrased, summarized or quoted directly. The only exception is what is loosely termed „general knowledge% or „common knowledge%, which is information or ideas generally known and accepted by everyone, including the writer and the audience.

You must cite and document all ideas and arguments borrowed from an outside source.

### **ACTIVITY 1.3**

Why do you think formal work should always be documented?

## **Lecture 21: Tips On Written Communication**

As the above quote shows, writing is a complex process. There is no short cut to being a good writer. If you want to write well, you need to first of all, read extensively. You must read not just books on writing but magazines, websites, newspapers, newsletters and others □ anything that you can get your hands on. Do not be overly concerned with

grammar and spelling when you first start out. You can always fix those later. What is important is to put your thoughts down on paper first. The next section will outline some tips and guidelines to help you get started.

### **The Writing Process**

Successful written communication requires careful thought and planning. It should contain comprehensive information about a specific subject and yet be clear, correct and easy to read. A well-written piece of work requires you to pay attention to the following three stages in the writing process:

- Planning;
- Writing; and
- Editing.

#### **(a) Planning**

To write a good report, you need to plan what you want to say. After you have decided on what you want to say, list down all the points and arrange them in a logical and suitable sequence. This approach will ensure the clarity of your message and help you to avoid omitting relevant details. „We all use language to communicate, express ourselves, get our ideas across and connect with the person to whom we are speaking. When a relationship is working, the act of communication seems to flow relatively effortlessly. When a relationship is deteriorating, the act of communicating can be as frustrating as climbing a hill of sand. The writing stage requires careful planning. It includes a pre-writing stage where you gather all the information necessary to ensure that there is substance to your writing. Start writing in simple and plain English and move from something concrete to something more abstract and expressive. In order to improve your writing skills, you need to practise writing in the target language everyday until you are able to express yourself clearly and meet the needs of your reader. Once you start writing, the words, sentences, paragraphs and lay-outs become writing tools which you can use to convey your message concisely, courteously, and confidently. Sebranek, Meyer and Kemper (1996) summed it up in a nutshell when they say that writing is like „...basketball and juggling, (it) is not a God-given mysterious talent given only to a chosen few but, rather, a skill that gets better with practice, practice that involves increased challenges and, therefore, risk.%“

Adopt a plain, straightforward style when writing as this makes your work easy to understand and reduces the chances of misunderstanding arising from ambiguity.

(c) Editing The third stage in the writing process is editing. It is crucial to check for grammatical errors and ensure that there is smooth language flow. The longer the report, the more editing is usually required. It can be useful to get someone else to read through the written piece for you.

### **Lecture 22: Pitfalls to Avoid**

Basically, there are four types of errors that you must try to avoid in written communication, as shown in Figure 1.2.

#### **(a) Confusing Language**

Confusing language refers to words that mislead the reader and cause communication breakdown. It may also result in barriers being erected between the writer and the reader. Avoid words which are ambiguous, bombastic, vague, sexist, exaggerated, inflated and archaic. Remember to write in plain, good English.

Common errors in writing

#### **(b) Verbosity**

Verbosity means the use of too many words, so much so that they interfere with understanding. If verbosity persists, it may antagonise, confuse, and bore the reader.

#### **(c) Information Overload**

Information overload means giving so much information till you feel overwhelmed and confused. This may cause frustration and cast doubts on the writer's credibility. Therefore, as a writer, you must decide on the type of information required and present this to produce a clear, concise and relevant piece of written work. The following examples have misplaced modifiers\*. Re-order the words to make them acceptable, presentable and grammatically correct.

### **Lecture 23: Asking the Right Questions**

If a channel of communication is blocked or has come to a standstill, you may need to pause a moment, and re-evaluate the situation. You have to find out where things have gone wrong. One way to start doing this is by posing questions to yourself:

- Where did it go wrong?
- Why was the message not understood or misinterpreted by the receiver?
- Was the timing bad?
- Did I use the correct channel to deliver the message?
- Are there many errors or mistakes in the document?

The answers to these questions may shed some light on where the communication had gone wrong. In order to make it easy for others to understand your communication and respond accordingly, you should make sure that you provide the following:

- A clear indication of your purpose.
- Accurate and objective information.

- Appropriate headings and sub-headings.
- A suitable order of information.
- Concise and precise instructions.
- Desired action clearly spelled out.

#### ACTIVITY 1.7

Think of possible reasons why people have failed to respond to your written communication in the past. Share this with your friends at the next tutorial session. Upon receiving the written communication or report, the reader should understand the contents of the report clearly; know precisely what action needs to be taken; how to do it; when to do it; and in what manner it should be done.

- This topic highlights the importance of communication, its meaning, and the relationship between the message, sender and receiver.
- Communication is defined as the giving, receiving or exchanging of information, opinions or ideas so that the message is completely understood by everybody involved.
- A two-way process, communication comprises the following elements □ the sender, message, channel, receiver, feedback, and context.
- Barriers to effective communication include status and roles, cultural differences, choice of communication channel, length of communication, disabilities, use of language, individual perceptions, noise and distraction, clarity of message, and feedback.
- There are three important stages to producing good written communication:
  - Planning;
  - Writing; and
  - Editing.
- The pitfalls to avoid in written communication are using confusing language, verbosity, poor sentence structure, and information overload.
- All borrowed materials must be cited.
- People sometimes fail to respond to written forms of communication for various reasons, for instance, the message is not clear, the language is weak or there is too much information.
- The receiver of any written report should be able to understand the contents of the report, know precisely what action needs to be taken, how to do it and in what manner it should be done.

### Lecture 24: Communication: The Process, Barriers,

#### ABSTRACT

Communication is the process of transmitting information and common understanding from one person to another. In this article, I discuss the communication process, barriers to communication, and improving communication effectiveness.

The study of communication is important, because every administrative function and activity involves some form of direct or indirect communication. Whether planning and organizing or leading and monitoring, school administrators communicate with and through other people. This implies that every person's communication skills affect both personal and organizational effectiveness (Brun, 2010; Summers, 2010). It seems reasonable to conclude that one of the most inhibiting forces to organizational effectiveness is a lack of effective communication (Lutgen-Sandvik, 2010). Moreover, good communication skills are very important to one's success as a school administrator. A recent study indicated that recruiters rated communication skills as *the* most important characteristic of an ideal job candidate (Yate, 2009).

In this article, I will help you to better understand how school administrators can improve their communication skills. To begin, I define what is meant by communication and then discuss the process by which it occurs. Following this, I examine barriers to communication and ways to improve communication effectiveness.

#### Defining Communication and Describing the Process

*Communication* can be defined as the process of transmitting information and common understanding from one person to another (Keyton, 2011). The word communication is derived from the Latin word, *communis*, which means *common*. The definition underscores the fact that unless a common understanding results from the SCHOOLING exchange of information, there is no communication. Figure 1 reflects the definition and identifies the important elements of the communication process (Cheney, 2011) Feedback Medium Noise Message Decode **Receiver** Encode Encode **Sender** Decode

### Lecture 25: The communication process.

Two common elements in every communication exchange are the sender and the receiver. The *sender* initiates the communication. In a school, the sender is a person who has a need or desire to convey an idea or concept to others. The *receiver* is the individual to whom the message is sent. The sender *encodes* the idea by selecting words, symbols, or gestures with which to compose a message. The *message* is the outcome of the encoding, which takes the form of verbal, nonverbal, or written language. The message is sent through a *medium* or channel, which is the carrier of the

communication. The medium can be a face-to-face conversation, telephone call, e-mail, or written report. The receiver *decodes* the received message into meaningful information. *Noise* is anything that distorts the message. Different perceptions of the message, language barriers, interruptions, emotions, and attitudes are examples of noise. Finally, *feedback* occurs when the receiver responds to the sender's message and returns the message to the sender. Feedback allows the sender to determine whether the message has been received and understood.

The elements in the communication process determine the quality of communication. A problem in any one of these elements can reduce communication effectiveness (Keyton, 2011). For example, information must be encoded into a message that can be understood as the sender intended. Selection of the particular medium for transmitting the message can be critical, because there are many choices.

For written media, a school administrator or other organization member may choose from memos, letters, reports, bulletin boards, handbooks, newsletters, and the like. For verbal media, choices include face-to-face conversations, telephone, computer, public address systems, closed-circuit television, tape-recorded messages, sound/slide shows, e-mail, and so on. Nonverbal gestures, facial expressions, body position, and even clothing can transmit messages. People decode information selectively. Individuals are more likely to perceive information favorably when it conforms to their own beliefs, values, and needs (Keyton, 2010). When feedback does not occur, the communication process is referred to as one-way communication. Two-way communication occurs with feedback and is more desirable.

The key for being successful in the contemporary school is the ability of the school administrator to work with other school stakeholders (faculty, support staff, community members, parents, central office); and develop a shared sense of what the school/school district is attempting to accomplish – where it wants to go, a shared sense of commitments that people have to make in order to advance the school/school district toward a shared vision and clarity of goals. As school administrators are able to build a shared mission, vision, values, and goals, the school/school district will become more effective. Building a relationship between school administrators and other school stakeholders requires effective communication.

For example, research indicates that principals spend 70 to 80% of their time in interpersonal communication with various stakeholders (Green, 2010; Lunenburg & Irby, 2006; Matthews & Crow, 2010; Sergiovanni, 2009; Tareilo, 2011; Ubben, Hughes, & Norris, 2011). Effective principals know how to communicate, and they understand the importance of ongoing communication, both formal and informal: faculty and department meetings; individual conversations with parents, teachers, and students; and telephone calls and e-mail messages with various stakeholder groups.

The one constant in the life of a principal is a lot of interruptions – they happen daily, with a number of one- and three-minute conversations in the course of the day. This type of communication in the work of the principal has to be done one on one - one phone call to one person at a time, one parent at a time, one teacher at a time, one student at a time; and a principal needs to make time for these conversations. For example, a principal may be talking with a parent with a very serious problem. She may be talking with a community member. She may be talking with the police about something that went on during the school day. The principal must be able to turn herself on and off in many different roles in any given day.

## Lecture 26: Barriers to Effective Communication

A school administrator has no greater responsibility than to develop effective communication (Pauley, 2010). Why then does communication break down? On the surface, the answer is relatively simple. I have identified the elements of communication as the sender, the encoding, the message, the medium, the decoding, the receiver, and the feedback. If noise exists in these elements in any way, complete clarity of meaning and understanding does not occur. The author, George Bernard Shaw wrote, || The greatest problem with communication is the illusion that it has been accomplished|| (Shaw, 2011). Four types of barriers (called –noise,|| see Figure 1) are process barriers, physical barriers, semantic barriers, and psychosocial barriers (Eisenberg, 2010). SCHOOLING

### Process Barriers

Every step in the communication process is necessary for effective and good communication.. Blocked steps become barriers. Consider the following situations:

- **Sender barrier.** A new administrator with an innovative idea fails to speak up at a meeting, chaired by the superintendent, for fear of criticism.
- **Encoding barrier.** A Spanish-speaking staff member cannot get an English-speaking administrator to understand a grievance about working conditions.
- **Medium barrier.** A very upset staff member sends an emotionally charged letter to the leader instead of transmitting her feelings face-to-face.
- **Decoding barrier.** An older principal is not sure what a young department head means when he refers to a teacher as "spaced out."
- **Receiver barrier.** A school administrator who is preoccupied with the preparation of the annual budget asks a staff member to repeat a statement, because she was not listening attentively to the conversation.
- **Feedback barrier.** During a meeting, the failure of school administrators to ask any questions causes the superintendent to wonder if any real understanding has taken place.

Because communication is a complex, give-and-take process, breakdowns anywhere in the cycle can block the transfer of understanding.

## Physical Barriers

Any number of physical distractions can interfere with the effectiveness of communication, including a telephone call, drop-in visitors, distances between people, walls, and static on the radio. People often take physical barriers for granted, but sometimes they can be removed. For example, an inconveniently positioned wall can be removed. Interruptions such as telephone calls and drop-in visitors can be removed by issuing instructions to a secretary. An appropriate choice of media can overcome distance barriers between people.

## Lecture 27: Semantic Barriers

The words we choose, how we use them, and the meaning we attach to them cause many communication barriers. The problem is semantic, or the meaning of the words we use. The same word may mean different things to different people. Words and phrases such as *efficiency*, *increased productivity*, *management prerogatives*, and *just cause* may mean one thing to a school administrator, and something entirely different to a staff member.

Technology also plays a part in semantic barriers to communication. Today's complex school systems are highly specialized. Schools have staff and technical experts developing and using specialized terminology—jargon that only other similar staff and technical experts can understand. And if people don't understand the words, they cannot understand the message.

## Psychosocial Barriers

Three important concepts are associated with psychological and social barriers: fields of experience, filtering, and psychological distance (Antos, 2011). *Fields of experience* include people's backgrounds, perceptions, values, biases, needs, and expectations. Senders can encode and receivers decode messages only in the context of their fields of experience. When the sender's field of experience overlaps very little with the receiver's, communication becomes difficult. *Filtering* means that more often than not we see and hear what we are emotionally tuned in to see and hear. Filtering is caused by our own needs and interests, which guide our listening. Psychosocial barriers often involve a *psychological distance* between people that is similar to actual physical distance. For example, the school administrator talks down to a staff member, who resents this attitude, and this resentment separates them, thereby blocking opportunity for effective communication.

Successful communication by school administrators is the essence of a productive school organization. However, as discussed previously, communications do break down. Several communication theorists (Abrell, 2004; Auer, 2011; Larson, 2011; Shettleworth, 2010; Weiss, 2011) have focused on the major areas where failures in communication most frequently occur. The following are the major areas where communication breakdowns most frequently occur in schools:

- **Sincerity.** Nearly all communication theorists assert that sincerity is the foundation on which all true communication rests. Without sincerity—honesty, straightforwardness, and authenticity—all attempts at communication are destined to fail.
- **Empathy.** Research shows that lack of empathy is one of the major obstacles to effective communication. Empathy is the ability to put one's self into another's shoes. The empathetic person is able to see the world through the eyes of the other person.
- **Self-perception.** How we see ourselves affects our ability to communicate effectively. A healthy but realistic self-perception is a necessary ingredient in communicating with others.
- **Role perception.** Unless people know what their role is, the importance of their role, and what is expected of them, they will not know what to communicate, when to communicate, or to whom to communicate.
- **Efforts to distort the message.** Pitfalls in communication often occur in our efforts—both consciously and unconsciously—to distort messages.
- **Images.** Another obstacle to successful communication is the sender's image of the receiver and vice versa. For example, on the one hand, school administrators are sometimes viewed as not too well informed about teaching, seen as out of touch with the classroom, and looked on as paper shufflers. On the other hand, some school administrators view teachers as lazy, inconsiderate of administrative problems, and unrealistic about the strengths and weaknesses of their students. Such views lead to a "we-they" attitude.
- **Vehicle for message.** The vehicle by which we choose to send messages is important in successful communication. In most cases, the vehicle to be used is defined by the situation.
- **Ability to communicate.** Some of the ways we communicate raise barriers by inhibiting discussion or causing others to feel inferior, angry, hostile, dependent, compliant, or subservient.
- **Listening ability.** Frequently, people fail to appreciate the importance of listening, do not care enough to become actively involved with what others are saying, and are not sufficiently motivated to develop the skills necessary to acquire the art of listening.
- **Culture.** Our cultural heritage, biases, and prejudices often serve as barriers to communication. The fact that we are African-American or white, young or old, male or female have all proved to be obstacles in communicating effectively.
- **Tradition.** Past practice in a school helps determine how, when, and what we send and receive. For example, a school administrator who has an authoritative style may find that his staff will not share information readily. If a new administrator with a collaborative style replaces the authoritarian one, the new administrator may find that it takes a while for his colleagues to speak out on important issues.

- **Conditioning.** The manner in which communication is conditioned by the environment influences the accuracy of messages sent and received. If we work for administrators who set a climate in which we are encouraged to share information, we soon become conditioned to communicate accordingly.
- **Noise.** A major barrier to communication is what communication experts call noise. Noise consists of the external factors in the channels and the internal perceptions and experiences within the source and the receiver that affect communication.
- **Feedback.** Faculty and staff tell their leaders that they want feedback. However, feedback improperly given can impede communication rather than improve it. Administrators and followers both need more training in how to use feedback more productively.

## Lecture 28: Improving Communication Effectiveness

Effective communication is a two-way process that requires effort and skill by both sender and receiver. Administrators will at times assume each of these roles in the communication process. In this section, I discuss guidelines for improving communication effectiveness, including senders' and receivers' responsibilities, and listening.

### Sender's Responsibilities

Several communication theorists (Cheney, 2011; Keyton, 2011; Tourish, 2010) have gleaned ten commandments of good communication, which are particularly applicable to the sender. These commandments, together with a basic understanding of the communication process itself, should provide a good foundation for developing and maintaining an effective set of interpersonal communication skills, which school administrators can use when communicating with various school stakeholders.

1. **School administrators need to clarify their ideas before communicating.** The more systematically administrators analyze the problem or idea to be communicated, the clearer it becomes. This is the first step toward effective communication. Many communications fail because of inadequate planning. Good planning must consider the goals, attitudes, and needs of those who will receive the communication and those who will be affected by it.
2. **Administrators need to examine the true purpose of each communication.** Before administrators communicate, they must ask themselves what they really want to accomplish with their message—obtain information, initiate action, or change another person's attitude? Administrators need to identify their most important goal and then adapt their language, tone, and total approach to serve that specific objective. Administrators should not try to accomplish too much with each communication. The sharper the focus of their message, the greater its chances of success.
3. **Administrators need to consider the total physical and human setting.** Meaning and intent are conveyed by more than words alone. Many other factors influence the overall impact of a communication, and administrators must be sensitive to the total setting in which they communicate: the circumstances under which an announcement or decision is made; the physical setting—whether the communication is made in private or otherwise; the social climate that pervades work relationships within the school or department and sets the tone of its communications; custom and practice—the degree to which the communication conforms to, or departs from, the expectations of the audience. Be constantly aware of the total setting in which you communicate. Like all living things, communication must be capable of adapting to its environment.
4. **Administrators need to consult with others, when appropriate, in planning communications.** Frequently, it is desirable or necessary to seek the participation of others in planning a communication or in developing the facts on which to base the communication. Such consultation often lends additional insight and objectivity to the message. Moreover, those who have helped plan the communication will give it their active support.
5. **Administrators need to be mindful, while communicating, of the overtones as well as the basic content of the message.** The administrator's tone of voice, expression, and apparent receptiveness to the responses of others all have tremendous impact on those the administrator wishes to reach. Frequently overlooked, these subtleties of communication often affect a listener's reaction to a message even more than its basic content. Similarly, the administrator's choice of language—particularly her awareness of the fine shades of meaning and emotion in the words used—predetermine in large part the reactions of the listeners.
6. **Administrators need to take the opportunity, when it arises, to convey something of help or value to the receiver.** Consideration of the other person's interests and needs—trying to look at things from the other person's point of view—frequently points up opportunities to convey something of immediate benefit or long-range value to the other person. Staff members are most responsive to administrators whose messages take staff interests into account.
7. **Administrators need to follow up their communication.** An administrator's best efforts at communication may be wasted, and she may never know whether she has succeeded in expressing her true meaning and intent if she does not follow up to see how well she has put her message across. An administrator can do this by asking questions, by encouraging the receiver to express his or her reactions, by follow-up contacts, and by subsequent review of performance. An administrator needs to make certain that every important communication has feedback so that complete understanding and appropriate action result.



8. **Administrators need to communicate for tomorrow as well as today.** Although communications may be aimed primarily at meeting the demands of an immediate situation, they must be planned with the past in mind if they are to maintain consistency in the receiver's view. Most important, however, communications must be consistent with long-range interests and goals. For example, it is not easy to communicate frankly on such matters as poor performance or the shortcomings of a loyal staff member, but postponing disagreeable communications makes these matters more difficult in the long run and is actually unfair to your staff and your school organization.

9. **Administrators need to be sure that their actions support their communications.** In the final analysis, the most persuasive kind of communication is not what administrators say, but what they do. When leaders' actions or attitudes contradict their words, others tend to discount what they have said. For every administrator, this means that good supervisory practices—such as clear assignment of responsibility and authority, fair rewards for effort, and sound policy enforcement—serve to communicate more than all the gifts of oratory.

10. **Administrators need to seek, not only to be understood, but to understand—be a good listener.** When an administrator starts talking, he often ceases to listen, at least in that larger sense of being attuned to the other person's unspoken reactions and attitudes. Even more serious is the occasional inattentiveness a leader may be guilty of when others are attempting to communicate with him. Listening is one of the most important, most difficult, and most neglected skills in communication. It demands that the administrator concentrate not only on the explicit meanings another person is expressing, but also on the implicit meanings, unspoken words, and undertones that may be far more significant. Thus, an administrator must learn to listen with the inner ear if he is to know the inner person.

### Lecture 29: Receiver's Responsibilities

Communication depends on the ability not only to send but also to receive messages. So the ability to listen effectively greatly enhances the communication process. But many of us are not good listeners. Effective listening skills can be developed, however. Summarized following are ten rules for good listening (Kneen, 2011):

1. **Stop talking.** You cannot listen if you are talking. For example, Polonius in *Hamlet* said: "Give every man thine ear, but few thy voice."
2. **Put the talker at ease.** Help a person feel free to talk. This is often called a permissive environment.
3. **Show a talker that you want to listen.** Look and act interested. Do not read your mail while someone talks. Listen to understand rather than to oppose.
4. **Remove distractions.** Don't doodle, tap, or shuffle papers. Will it be quieter if you shut the door?
5. **Empathize with talkers.** Try to help yourself see the other person's point of view.
6. **Be patient.** Allow plenty of time. Do not interrupt a talker. Don't start for the door or walk away.
7. **Hold your temper.** An angry person takes the wrong meaning from words.
8. **Go easy on argument and criticism.** These put people on the defensive, and they may clam up or become angry. Do not argue: Even if you win, you lose.
9. **Ask questions.** This encourages a talker and shows that you are listening. It helps to develop points further.
10. **Stop talking.** This is first and last, because all other guides depend on it. You cannot do an effective listening job while you are talking.

Nature gave people two ears but only one tongue, which is a gentle hint that they should listen more than they talk. Listening requires two ears, one for meaning and one for feeling. Leaders who do not listen have less information for making sound decisions.

#### Active Listening

*Active listening* is a term popularized by the work of Carl Rogers and Richard Farson (n.d.) and advocated by counselors and therapists (Brownell, 2009; Burstein, 2010). The concept recognizes that a sender's message contains both verbal and nonverbal content as well as a feeling component. The receiver should be aware of both components in order to comprehend the total meaning of the message. For instance, when a staff member says to her supervisor, "Next time you ask me to prepare a report, please give me some advance notice." The content conveys that the staff member needs time, but the feeling component may indicate resentment for being pressured to meet a deadline with such short notice. The supervisor, therefore, must recognize this feeling to understand the staff member's message. There are five guidelines that can help school administrators to become more active listeners (Rogers & Farson, n.d.).

1. **Listen for message content.** The receiver must try to hear exactly what the sender is saying in the message.
2. **Listen for feelings.** The receiver must try to identify how the sender feels in terms of the message content. This can be done by asking: "What is he trying to say?"
3. **Respond to feelings.** The receiver must let the sender know that her feelings, as well as the message content are recognized.
4. **Note all cues, verbal and nonverbal.** The receiver must be sensitive to the nonverbal messages as well as the verbal ones. If the receiver identifies mixed messages, he may ask for clarification.
5. **Rephrase the sender's message.** The receiver may restate or paraphrase the verbal and nonverbal messages as feedback to the sender. The receiver can do this by allowing the sender to respond with further information. The last guideline is one of the most powerful of the active listening techniques and is used regularly by counselors and therapists. It helps the receiver avoid passing judgment or giving advice, and encourages the sender to provide more information about what is really the problem.

## Lecture 30: Problems in intercultural communication

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The problems in intercultural communication usually come from problems in message transmission. In communication between people of the same culture, the person who receives the message interprets it based on values, beliefs, and expectations for behavior similar to those of the person who sent the message. When this happens, the way the message is interpreted by the receiver is likely to be fairly similar to what the speaker intended. However, when the receiver of the message is a person from a different culture, the receiver uses information from his or her culture to interpret the message. The message that the receiver interprets may be very different from what the speaker intended.

Attribution is the process in which people look for an explanation of another person's behavior. When someone does not understand another, he/she usually blames the confusion on the other's "stupidity, deceit, or craziness".

Effective communication depends on the informal understandings among the parties involved that are based on the trust developed between them. When trust exists, there is implicit understanding within communication, cultural differences may be overlooked, and problems can be dealt with more easily. The meaning of trust and how it is developed and communicated vary across societies. Similarly, some cultures have a greater propensity to be trusting than others.

Nonverbal communication is behavior that communicates without words—though it often may be accompanied by words. Minor variations in body language, speech rhythms, and punctuality often cause mistrust and misperception of the situation among cross-cultural parties.

Kinesic behavior is communication through body movement—e.g., posture, gestures, facial expressions and eye contact. The meaning of such behavior varies across countries.

Oculistics are a form of kinesics that includes eye contact and the use of the eyes to convey messages.

Proxemics concern the influence of proximity and space on communication (e.g., in terms of personal space and in terms of office layout). For example, space communicates power in the US and Germany.

Paralanguage refers to how something is said, rather than the content of what is said—e.g., rate of speech, tone and inflection of voice, other noises, laughing, yawning, and silence.

Object language or material culture refers to how we communicate through material artifacts—e.g., architecture, office design and furniture, clothing, cars, cosmetics, and time. In monochronic cultures, time is experienced linearly and as something to be spent, saved, made up, or wasted. Time orders life, and people tend to concentrate on one thing at a time. In polychronic cultures, people tolerate many things happening simultaneously and emphasize involvement with people. In these cultures, people may be highly distractible, focus on several things at once, and change plans often.

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## Lecture 31: Intercultural communication competence

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Intercultural communication is competent when it accomplishes the objectives in a manner that is appropriate to the context and relationship. Intercultural communication thus needs to bridge the dichotomy between appropriateness and effectiveness:<sup>[20]</sup> Proper means of intercultural communication leads to a 15% decrease in miscommunication.<sup>[19]</sup>

- **Appropriateness.** Valued rules, norms, and expectations of the relationship are not violated significantly.
- **Effectiveness.** Valued goals or rewards (relative to costs and alternatives) are accomplished.

**Competent communication** is an interaction that is seen as effective in achieving certain rewarding objectives in a way that is also related to the context in which the situation occurs. In other words, it is a conversation with an achievable goal that is used at an appropriate time/location.<sup>[20]</sup>

### Components of intercultural competence<sup>[edit]</sup>

Intercultural communication can be linked with identity, which means the competent communicator is the person who can affirm others' avowed identities. As well as goal attainment is also a focus within intercultural competence and it involves the communicator to convey a sense of communication appropriateness and effectiveness in diverse cultural contexts.<sup>[20]</sup>

Ethnocentrism plays a role in intercultural communication. The capacity to avoid ethnocentrism is the foundation of intercultural communication competence. Ethnocentrism is the inclination to view one's own group as natural and correct, and all others as aberrant.

People must be aware that to engage and fix intercultural communication there is no easy solution and there is not only one way to do so. Listed below are some of the components of intercultural competence.<sup>[20]</sup>

- **Context:** A judgement that a person is competent is made in both a relational and situational context. This means that competence is not defined as a single attribute, meaning someone could be very strong in one section and only moderately good in another. Situationally speaking competence can be defined differently for different cultures. For example, eye contact shows competence in western cultures whereas, Asian cultures find too much eye contact disrespectful.
- **Appropriateness:** This means that your behaviours are acceptable and proper for the expectations of any given culture.
- **Effectiveness:** The behaviours that lead to the desired outcome being achieved.
- **Knowledge:** This has to do with the vast information you have to have on the person's culture that you are interacting with. This is important so you can interpret meanings and understand culture-general and culture-specific knowledge.

**Motivations:** This has to do with emotional associations as they communicate interculturally. Feelings which are your reactions to thoughts and experiences have to do with motivation. Intentions are thoughts that guide your choices, it is a goal or plan that directs your behaviour. These two things play a part in motivation.

## Lecture 32: Interpersonal Communication Skills

**Interpersonal Skills are the skills we use when engaged in face-to-face communication with one or more other people.**

What we say is an important way of getting our message across - see **Verbal Communication** and **Effective Speaking** - but using our voice is only the tip of the iceberg. We actually communicate more information using non-verbal signals, gestures, facial expression, body language even our appearance - see our pages: **Non-verbal Communication, Personal Presentation** and **Personal Appearance** for more information.

**Listening is a vital interpersonal communication skill.** When we communicate we spend 45% of our time listening. Most people take listening for granted but it is not the same as hearing and should be thought of as a skill. Our **Listening Skills** page acts as an introduction to the subject and lists the ten principles of listening. **Active Listening** provides a lot more information about how to listen effectively and can help you to avoid misunderstandings. We also have a page on **Ineffective Listening**, you may recognise some of the bad habits you or other people have picked up when listening.

Reflection and clarification are both common techniques used to ensure that what you have heard and understood is what was intended - you can find out more on our pages **Reflecting** and **Clarification**.

**Good interpersonal communication skills enable us to work more effectively in groups and teams**, which may be either formal, like at work, or informally - in social situations. Our pages **What are Groups and Teams?** and **Group Roles** explain the importance of group interactions. We also have a page on **Meetings** and some guidelines about **How to Conduct a Meeting**. It is often desirable to build strong relationships with others, which can in turn lead to better communication and understanding - see **Building Rapport** for help with understanding how to develop interpersonal relationships and **What is Empathy?** to find out how you can take these principles further and develop empathy for others.

**Interpersonal communication skills are essential to developing other key life skills.** Being able to communicate well with others is often essential to solving problems that inevitably occur both in our private and professional lives. Our section on **Problem Solving** provides information and advice to aid constructive and effective problem solving. Decision making is another area which can benefit from good communication skills as it often requires communicating complex information so that the most appropriate decision can be made. See our section: **Decision Making** for more information.

Interpersonal communication is a large subject area; our page **Barriers to Effective Communication** details some of the common barriers that may mean our communication fails or is less effective than it should be. Learn to avoid such barriers and allow your messages to be sent and received with greater accuracy. We also provide some more specific pages that may be of interest, examples include: **Interpersonal Skills for Children, Principles of Interpersonal Communication** and **Dealing with Criticism**.

## Conclusion

Each of the variables discussed in this article – time and space, personal responsibility and fate, face and face-saving, and nonverbal communication – are much more complex than it is possible to convey. Each of them influences the course of communications, and can be responsible for conflict or the escalation of conflict when it leads to miscommunication or misinterpretation.

All communication is cultural – it draws on ways we have learned to speak and give nonverbal messages. We do not always communicate the same way from day to day, since factors like context, individual personality, and mood interact with the variety of cultural influences and choices. Communication is interactive, so an important influence on its effectiveness is our relationship with others. Perfecting ourselves in effective communication skills can ease our move through conflicts. A culturally-fluent approach to conflict means working over time to understand these and other ways communication varies across cultures, and applying these understandings in order to enhance relationships across differences.

Communication is the process of transmitting information and common understanding from one person to another. The elements of the communication process are the sender, encoding the message, transmitting the message through a medium, receiving the message, decoding the message, feedback, and noise. A number of barriers retard effective communication. These can be divided into four categories: process barriers, physical barriers, semantic barriers, and psychosocial barriers. To improve the effectiveness of communications, schools must develop an awareness of the importance of sender's and receiver's responsibilities and adhere to active listening skills.

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