

The Importance of Culture and Communication

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Introduction

Cultural communication is the practise and study of how various cultures interact verbally and nonverbally within their communities. Intercultural communication and cross-cultural communication are other terms for cultural communication. Cultures are defined by a set of shared beliefs, values, traditions and expectations, all of which contribute to communication gaps between people from different cultures. For many psychologists, anthropologists and academics, cultural communication is both a practise and an area of study. The study of cultural communication is used to investigate how people from various cultures interact with one another. Cultural communication research is being used to improve communication among international exchanges, enterprises, employees and corporations. Edward T. Hall and Geert Hofstede are two significant scholars who have influenced cultural communication studies. Edward T. Hall, an American anthropologist, is credited with founding cultural communication and the proxemics theory. The proxemics theory examines how people use space when talking and how this varies depending on their cultural backgrounds or social situations. There are four main ranges of spacing between individuals that can be identified. 0 inches, for example, denotes personal space, whereas 12 feet denotes public area. Geert Hofstede, a social psychologist, is credited with developing the cultural dimension theory. There are five dimensions in his hypothesis that try to quantify variations between civilizations. Power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism against collectivism, masculinity versus femininity and masculinity versus femininity are the five dimensions [1].

Overview

Intercultural misunderstanding is based on the concept that in everyday communication, all persons subconsciously reflect their cultural backgrounds. Culture is expressed not only in the way individuals eat and dress, but also in how they portray themselves to the outside world. Language is an important component of communication and a reflection of one's cultural heritage. Different and competing styles of speech and messaging are frequently the source of cultural miscommunication. To a foreign listener, a totally typical intonation pattern for a native German speaker may sound furious and violent. Word connotations and slang phrase meanings differ considerably between cultures and a lack of tolerance and knowledge of this fact frequently leads to misinterpretations [2].

Because 70% of communication is nonverbal and only 30% is vocal, one must take the time to learn diverse cultures in order to completely comprehend the signals being communicated. Face expressions (happy, sad, angry, confused), which are interpreted differently around the world, eye contact (direct, no eye contact), body language (slouching, arm positioning, leg positioning, rocking motion, standing still), gestures (hand gestures, small

gestures, big gestures, no gestures), touching (reaching out to someone, touching arm) and proxemics (reaching out to someone, touching arm) are all examples of nonverbal communication (distance between each other). Nonverbal language differs from one culture to the next, just as verbal language does. All components of language are culturally influenced by what you saw and experienced as a child, which varies greatly depending on where you live. People will be able to completely comprehend what is happening in a conversation if they can blend the meanings of what is communicated orally and nonverbally. People's emotions can be conveyed through facial expressions while they are speaking or even when they are silent. People will be able to understand what is being told to them without the need of words if they know what different emotions look like as facial expressions.

Eye contact is a good illustration of how nonverbal communication differs depending on where you are in the world. Eye contact is utilised in the West to convey where your attention is focused as well as to demonstrate respect for the person speaking to you. Eye contact can be perceived as hostile in some Western countries. In different communities and parts of the world, the meanings of certain aspects of nonverbal communication are diverse. If you aren't educated on the habits of another culture before visiting or conversing with someone from that culture, differences in nonverbal communication might lead to cultural misinterpretation [3].

Power Distance

Power gap is a cultural theory that measures how people in different cultures perceive power imbalances. High power distance and low power distance are two notions that can be used to describe power distance. A culture with a high power distance is one in which people of a given societal status wield greater power and are revered and respected for it. Individuals with higher power are treated with considerable deference and respect by people with lower power in high power distance societies and they are frequently treated with tremendous privilege in society. Because the distribution of power is expected to be more equal in low power distance cultures, those with high power, such as managers or owners, may try to level themselves with those with lower power, such as employees or interns, by interacting with them and getting their opinions on certain issues.

The Power Distance Index can be used to calculate power distance. The degree of inequality between cultures is measured by this indicator. This scale goes from 0 to 100, with 0 denoting low power distance civilizations and 100 denoting high power distance cultures. The Philippines, Venezuela, India, France and Belgium are among the countries that rank higher on the power index scale, according to Geert Hofstede's index. Canada, Sweden, the United States, Norway and Finland are the countries that rank lowest on the scale. Scholars, psychologists and communication professionals have investigated power distance in a variety of methods. Multiple communication professionals from around the world collaborated on a study to show how power distance affects voice tone variation and projection across cultures. Individuals in a lower power distance culture exhibited a negative reaction to lower voice levels, according to the study, whereas those in a high power distance culture did not. The study also found that voice control among people in higher-level jobs has an impact on an individual's power distance, beliefs about and attitudes about work, as well as work performance [4].

Individualism vs. collectivism

Cultural awareness and understanding are enhanced by learning how different cultures communicate through language. Individualism vs. collectivism is a fundamental part of cultural communication. Individualistic societies place a high priority on independence and tend to concentrate on people closest to

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them. Collectivistic cultures encourage people to think as a community rather than as individuals. Persons in individualistic cultures place a higher priority on their own wants, needs and goals, whereas individuals in collectivistic cultures place a higher value on the group's wants, needs and objectives. Geert Hofstede, the creator of the dimensions of national culture, undertook a study to discover the varied cultural preferences of various countries in order to determine where they fall on a scale. The scale goes from 0 to 100, with 0 being a strong collectivist society and 100 representing a strong individualist country. The scale also revealed that countries that score closer to 100 on the scale have a statistical link to their wealth [5].

Conclusion

The United States of America, Canada, Australia and the United Kingdom are all considered to have strong individualistic cultures. Guatemala, Ecuador, Panama and Columbia are countries with low individualistic cultures. The countries mentioned below are thought to be poorer, while the ones listed earlier are seen to be wealthier. Individualistic civilizations and cultures are characterised by a high level of freedom; people in these cultures are expected to care for and worry about themselves, as well as their own families. Individuals in collectivistic societies are expected to care for their entire group, village, or community rather than just themselves. Individuals in collectivistic cultures perceive themselves as part of a collective, bind themselves into groups and value the aims of their groups over their own. Individualistic cultures can be found in communities, but their members detach themselves from the community and perceive themselves to be more self-sufficient. Individualistic societies are characterised by thinking in terms of "me and I." In collectivistic

civilizations, people think in terms of "we." Individualistic and collectivistic cultures have different ways of working in groups and prioritising relationships and goals. To better comprehend language and the diverse dynamics of cultures, psychologists, scholars and communication professionals use the contrasts between cultures and individualistic versus collectivistic cultures.

Conflict of Interest

None.

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