

ANALYSIS OF INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION IN ORGANIZATIONS

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***Abstract:** This article wants to highlight the communication mechanisms that influence intercultural management and the behaviour of people from different cultures in a company and the attire that must wear some of the world's cultures. This research aims to analyze how the overall objectives of the internal communication in organizations influence the effectiveness and organizational effectiveness, namely the organization's performance.*

Key words: intercultural communication, behavior, types of communication

JEL Classification Codes: J24, J80, D83.

1. INTRODUCTION

Communication, unlike other components of management and organization as a whole, has features that do not allow its research in the same way as other issues organizational or managerial. First, communication is omnipresent in all company activities; its study cannot be done in isolation but in the context of organizational and integration management functions.

Secondly, degree of generalization research is organizational communication lower than in other areas. Communication is specific to each company individually.

Each company has its own communication system according to the profile, size and especially, organizational culture. There are common elements, but elements of each organization determine the communication climate.

On the other hand, companies in Romania have much experience in this field. Those which are subsidiaries of large foreign companies and have the expertise of the mother company take rules, models, policies; practices need to be modified for local firms. Large domestic firms tried to create their own rules and systems of communication, but it wasn't a priority in all cases

The most important element in intercultural groups is communication and how it influences the discussions and the success of business.

2. THE IMPORTANCE OF INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

A major part of every international business is the global communication. In every international business activity, the success depends on the effectiveness of the communication with other cultures. Apart from the language differences, they need to focus on the social attributes, religion, attitudes and other facts from different cultures. All these communication terminologies are known as "Intercultural Communication".

Intercultural communication is not only about language, but also about managing a different language. There are different understandings about culture and language in other countries. People travelling and living abroad should make an attempt to become familiar with

the local culture and show respect, which will leave a positive impression and improve the relationship with the host. Moreover, using native-language slang and style in foreign countries is not recommended, because it will confuse listeners.

Hence, it is always better for more effective communication to explain things in simple words. People should not judge the behavior of others based on their own culture. For example, people from different cultures have different ways of greetings and should understand diverse behaviors around the world for effective intercultural communication.

Sheida Hodge responds to the question about the impediments of good communication: “Problems with meaning are especially important in cross-cultural communication. What you mean when you say something is not necessarily what the other side hears. Messages derive a large part of their meaning from their cultural context. In a cross-cultural communication, messages are composed or ‘coded’ in one context, sent, and then received or ‘decoded’ in another cultural context.” (Hodge, 2000, p. 145)

3. THE COMMUNICATION MODEL

Communication can be defined as the process of transmitting meanings (Blom and Meier, 2002, p. 73). Gibson (2002, p. 9) also states that communication is the exchange of meaning, involving the sending and receiving of information between a sender and a receiver. This happens not only through words, but also non-verbal factors are involved. The problem is that the message received can be very different from the message that was sent. Adler (1991, p. 64) even states that “(...) the sent message is never identical to the received message”.

A common model for communication is as follows (figure 1):

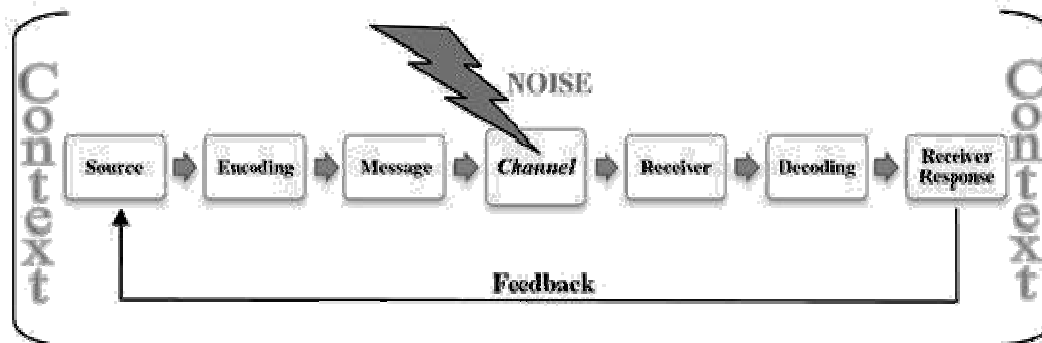


Figure 1. A common model for communication

Source: Own graph based on Jandt, 1995, as cited in Gibson, 2002

The idea or feeling is sent by the source by putting it into symbols. Several conditions influence the communication capacity, for example his/her communicative capabilities and his/her socio-cultural system, which disposes of implicit norms and values that influence the message (Blom and Meier, 2002, p. 75). The message is transmitted through a channel. A channel is a medium used for communication, for instance emails, letters, telephone calls or face-to-face conversations. Then, the message is interpreted (decoded) by the receiver, who responds. To see if the message has been understood, one has to measure the reaction and the feedback of the receiver. The context is seen as the general environment, also called extra-verbal communication level (Hasenstab, 1999, p.154), in which the communication takes place. Noise means anything that distorts the message. To see if the communication has been effective one has measure. “ (...) the degree to which a message is received and understood, and if the receiver’s reaction to the message correspond to the sender’s purpose in sending it ” (Tosi et al. 1990, pp. 450f).

Intercultural communication takes place when the sender and the receiver are from different cultures, meaning:“ (...) the process of communication between individuals from different cultures” (Jacob, 2003, p. 72).Communication can be very difficult if there is a big difference between the two cultures. Hence, if there is too much “cultural noise”, communication can fail (Gibson, 2002, p. 9). Intercultural communication generally involves face-to-face communication between people from different national cultures. The main personal traits that affect intercultural communication are:

1. self-concept (refers to the way in which a person views his- or herself);
2. self-disclosure (refers to the willingness of individuals to openly and appropriately reveal information about themselves to their counterparts);
3. self-monitoring (refers to the use of social comparison information to control and modify one’s self-presentation and expressive behavior);
4. social relaxation (the ability to reveal only little anxiety in communication).

Effective communicators must know themselves well and, with the help of their self-awareness, initiate positive attitudes. Individuals must express a friendly personality to be competent in intercultural communication. (Jandt, 2013, pp. 35f).

Nowadays, the telecommunication revolution permits rapid correspondence with business partners around the world. Communication via fax, telex, e-mail, cell phone and video conferencing enables us to constantly stay in touch with our international counterparts. Nevertheless, these technological marvels have not eliminated the need for face-to-face contact with our relationship-focused customers and partners. Relationship-focused people are less comfortable to discuss important issues in writing or by phone. They expect to see their suppliers and partners in person more often than is considered necessary in “deal-focused” markets. (Gesteland, 2002, p. 29)

4. NEGOTIATING ACROSS CULTURES

In any cross-cultural exchange between managers from different regions, the principal purpose of communication is to seek common ground – to exchange ideas, information, gain customers, and sometimes even establish partnerships between the parties. Business in general and management especially, rely on people’s willingness and ability to convey the meaning between managers, employees, partners, suppliers, investors and customers.

There are numerous comprehensive models that attempt to capture the various elements of the communication process (figure 2). According to this model, characteristics inherent in the cultural environments of each participant help to determine various beliefs underlying the communication process. In a cross-cultural environment, these cultural drivers often influence the extent to which communication would be open and sincere.

As a result of these normative beliefs, certain culturally compatible communication strategies emerge, including people’s expectations and objectives in initiating or responding to a message or comment, choice of language and transmission strategies. Three principal communication behaviors can be identified as verbal, non-verbal and virtual. These strategies are aimed at achieving a number of intended message outcomes.

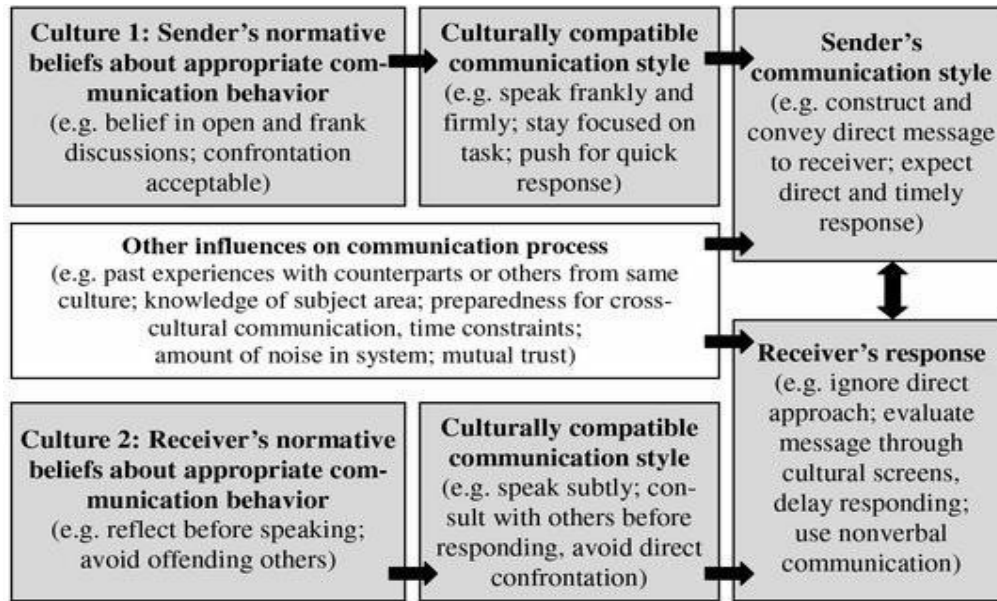


Figure 2. Cultural influences on the communication process – a model

Source: Adapted from Nardon/Sanchez-Runde/Steers, 2010, p. 202

Limitations on both message content and the choice of message transmission can be found across cultures. This is mostly a challenge for the senders as well as the recipients of the message. Senders must decide how to formulate a message, so it is consistent with the sender's culture but also consistent with the recipient's culture. However, what is acceptable in one culture might not necessarily be acceptable in another. Communication patterns include message content, message context, communication protocols, single-language communication, technology-mediated communication, and information-sharing patterns. These all patterns illustrate many of the challenges faced by global managers when communicating across cultures. (Nardon/Sanchez-Runde/Steers, 2010, p. 203)

Element	United States	Japanese	Arabians
Group composition	Marketing oriented	Function oriented	Committee of specialists
Number involved	2-3	4-7	4-6
Space orientation	Confrontational competitive	Display harmonious relationship	Status
Establishing rapport	short period; direct to task	Longer period; until harmony	Long period; until trusted
Use of language	Open, direct, sense of urgency	Indirect, appreciative, cooperative	Flattery, emotional, religious
First offer	Fair ± 5 to 10%	± 10 to 20%	± 20 to 50%
Second offer	Add to package; sweeten the deal	-5%	-10%
Final offer package	Total package	Makes no further Concessions	-25%
Decision-making process	Top management team	Collective	Team makes recommendation
Decision maker	Top management team	Middle line with team consensus	Senior manager
Risk taking	Calculated personal responsibility	Low group responsibility	Religion-based

Figure 3. Selected elements of the negotiation process in comparison between US-Americans, Japanese and Arabs (Source: Based on Chaney/Martin, 1995, p. 183)

5. LEVELS OF COMMUNICATION

According to Watzlawick et al. (1969) every message has a content aspect and a relationship aspect. Therefore, in our way of communicating with another person we also show our opinion about this person and in which relationship we are in. Hence, the aspect of content transmits information, facts, results etc. and the relationship aspect makes statements about the contact, climate, emotional aspects and the interpersonal relationship.

Relationship aspects are especially transmitted by non-verbal communication. With laughs, intonation, mimic and gestures the speaker expresses for instance what he thinks about the receiver of the message and how important conversation is for him/her. This makes it clear that non-verbal language is often the source of misunderstandings during intercultural meetings (Blom/Meier, 2002, pp.79–80). The interpretation of non-verbal behavior according to own cultural norms, although the conversational partner has his/her own encoding, leads to misunderstandings (ibid.). To understand intercultural communication requires an accurate perception of what is conveyed in the verbal as well as the para- and non-verbal mode. Regarding to that, Jacob (2003, p. 72) states that “beliefs and attitudes about a person from another culture can often be communicated through behavior, even when nothing has been verbalized.”

In the following figure, the modes of communication – verbal-, para-verbal-, and non-verbal – are illustrated (figure 4).

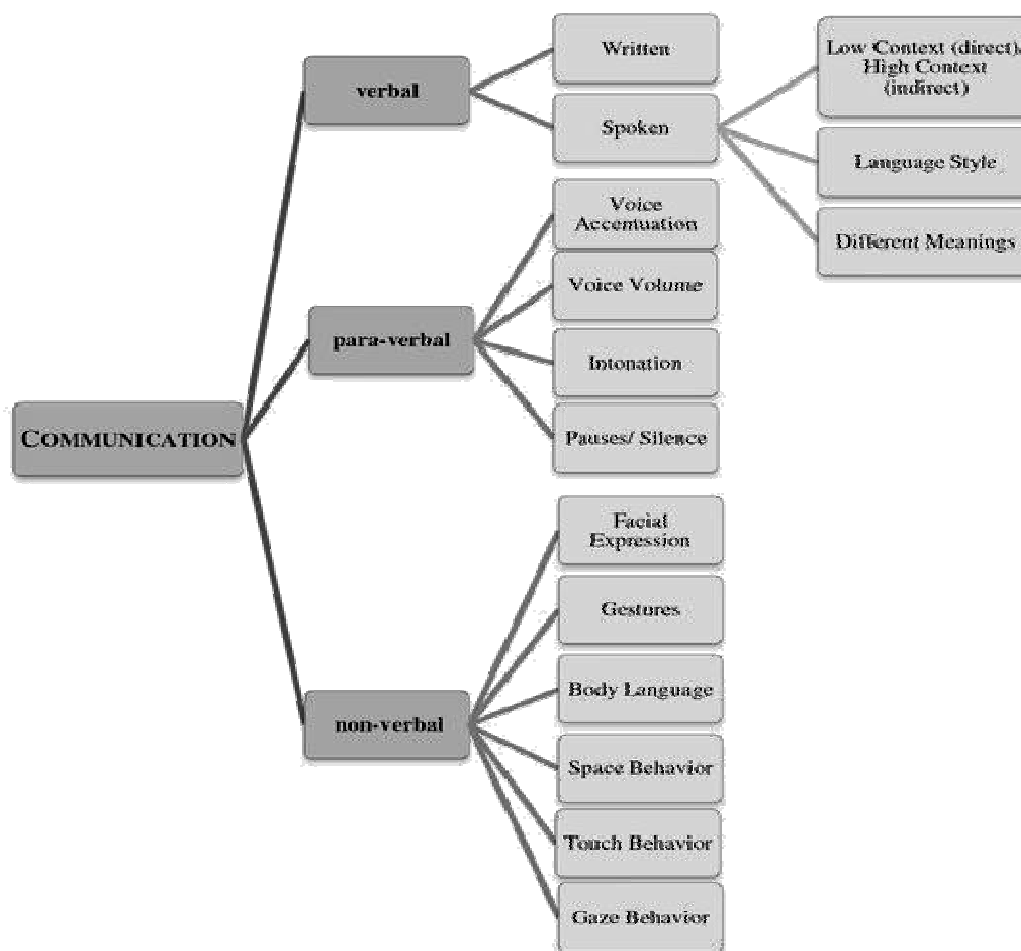


Figure 4. Modes of communication (Source: Own graph based on Blom/Meier, 2002)

6. TRANSLATION PROBLEMS

Even within one language and/or culture, translation problems can occur, e.g. when a metaphor is unknown or someone is sarcastic or misunderstood as being sarcastic.

Several problems that can lead to intercultural communication barriers are described in Table 1.

Table 1. Five possible translation problems

Vocabulary equivalence	“Languages that are different often lack words that are directly translatable.” (Jandt, 2013, pp. 141f)
Idiomatic equivalence	“In translating idioms, the translator meets various difficulties that are not so easy to overcome. The main problem is the lack of equivalence on the idiom level. It would be perfect if a translator could find an idiom in the target language which was the same in its form and meaning as that of the source language. However, even though each language has its idioms, it is still hard to find the exact equivalent.” (Straksiené, 2013, p. 1)
Grammatical-syntactical equivalence	“That simply means that languages don’t necessarily have the same grammar.” (Jandt, 2013, p. 143)
Experiential equivalence	“If an object or experience does not exist in your culture, it’s difficult to translate words referring to that object or experience into that language when no words may exist for them.” (ibid.)
Conceptual equivalence	“The problem of conceptual equivalence refers to abstract ideas that may not exist in the same fashion in different languages.” (ibid., pp. 143f)

7. ENGLISH “A LINGUA FRANCA”

In the whole world, the use of English has become more common and essential. In order to be able to communicate in the wide range of international business, English is set as the common communication language. While in the 19th century, English was the language of commerce, French of diplomacy and German of science, today English is the universal language of all three of them, although it is not the world-wide most widely spoken language, as you can see in the following figure. (Jandt, 2013, pp. 147f)

Through colonialism and emigrations the English language spread over to other continents and counted by 1990 an estimated number of 750 million people using English as their second language. Today English dominates areas like science, technology, commerce, tourism, diplomacy and music. It is the native language in 12 countries and 33 others use it as official or semiofficial language. The study of English is mandatory or admired in at least 56 countries. Through global communication English has become necessary for companies, scientists and politicians. (Jandt, 2013, pp. 148f.; Rothlauf, 2012, pp. 202f)

The five most widely spoken languages worldwide are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. The five most widely spoken languages worldwide

Language		Approximate number of speakers
1.	Chinese (Mandarin)	1,197,000,000 (848,000,000)
2.	Spanish	414,000,000
3.	English	335,000,000
4.	Hindi	260,000,000
5.	Arabic	237,000,000

8. THE NECESSITY OF MULTICULTURAL TEAMS

With the increasingly diverse workforce of this century, managers in today's multicultural organizations will need skills to realize the full potential of both domestic work teams and cross-border alliances. The ability to develop effective transnational teams is essential in light of the ongoing proliferation of foreign subsidiaries, joint ventures and other transnational alliances.

Multinational groups of many types are evident: the management team of an international joint venture, a group developing a product for multiple-country markets, a group responsible for formulating an integrated European strategy, a task force charged with developing recommendations for rationalizing worldwide manufacturing, and, increasingly, even the top management team of the firm itself" (Hambrick /Davidson/Snell/Snow, 1998, p. 181).

The term "multicultural teams" describes compositions of team members from several countries who must rely on group collaboration if each member is to experience the optimum of success and goal achievement. To achieve the individual and collective goals of the team members, international teams must provide the means to communicate the corporate culture, develop a global perspective, coordinate and integrate the global enterprise, and be responsive to the local market needs.

Group multiculturalism are (Hodgetts/Luthans)

- Homogenous groups, which are characterized by members who share similar backgrounds and generally perceive, interpret, and evaluate events in similar ways. An example would be a group of male German bankers who are forecasting the economic outlook for a foreign investment.
- Token groups, in which all members but one have the same background. An example would be a group of Japanese retailers and a British attorney who are looking into the benefits and shortcomings of setting up operations in Bermuda
- Bicultural groups, which have two or more members of a group, represent each of two distinct cultures. An example would be a group of four Mexicans and four Canadians who have formed a team to investigate the possibilities of investing in Russia.

9. CHALLENGES FOR MULTICULTURAL TEAMS

The role and importance of international teams increases as the company progresses in its scope of international activity. Similarly, the manner in which multicultural interactions affect

the firm's operations depends on its level of international involvement, its environment, and its strategy. For multinational enterprises, the role of multicultural teams again becomes integral to the company; since the teams consist of culturally diverse managers and technical experts located all around the world or at different subsidiaries.

“Situations in which a manager from one culture communicates with a native of another culture (one-on-one) or supervises a group from a different culture (token groups) can be quite difficult. What happens in work or project groups with members from two cultures (bicultural group) and in those with members representing three or more ethnic backgrounds (multicultural groups)?” (Kopper, 1992, p. 235)

The team's ability to work together effectively is crucial to the success of the company. However, each group member has a different perception of his or her contribution towards effectiveness and efficiency. Smith/Berg (1997, p. 7) have described in which ways those perceptions can differ:

- acceptance of authority
- goal building process
- motivation
- corporate strategy
- time management
- decision making process
- conflict solution
- emotions

Moreover, in culturally diverse groups, the perceptions of team members can widely differ as far as the analysis, the process situation itself, the evaluation and the contribution each team member has to deliver are concerned (Schroll-Machl, 1995, p. 212). In such a situation, the team members are looking for orientation and help which is normally part of their own cultural background. The logical consequence out of this scenario is quite obvious: irritation and mistrust will arise, because the expectations are not in line with the relevant perceptions. The situation will become worse if companies do not interculturally prepare their staff for international assignments.

The “Zürich-Versicherungs-Gesellschaft” belongs to those companies which have recognized the importance of providing intercultural training. A seminar entitled “Working Together in a Multicultural Organization” underlines the readiness of the company to prepare their staff for working in multicultural teams. The reasons for those intercultural trainings can be found in an analysis the company had carried out (Saunders, 1995, p. 94):

- premature return of the expatriate
- missing contacts with the local society
- communication problems within multicultural teams
- private problems, mainly caused by the dissatisfaction of family members

10. CONCLUSIONS

I gave a major importance of communication in this article because in an organization communication is of paramount importance. If we were to refer only to managerial decision and would be good enough emphasis as a success for its adoption and execution they are unthinkable without a perfect communication between the management team members and between them and the rest of the employees. Management consists, above all, in making, using communication, interpersonal influence a process exercised in a particular situation and directed toward achieving or achievement of objectives. To lead means to communicate means, above all, to convey ideas, feelings, decisions and subordinates the opportunity to return information.

Today, communication has become increasingly important and nuanced. In professional life, employees are faced with an excess of information, and communication failure and even absent. Information and communication are two different notions, but interdependent. Information put people in relationships with certain information and communication put people in relationships with other people.

But what it means to communicate? This period consists of the transmission of information by a source (transmitter) to one or more recipients (receivers), through channels and the media in the form of messages symbolic (coded) and the retransmission of a message (response) from the receiver to the transmitter (Emilian Radu).

Good communication leads to a system of mutual cooperation which would support organization for the realization of goals, being able to create such a climate generator efficiency and human satisfaction. Communication organization's mission is to a position, to confer a renowned personality and an identity distinct from the competition. Internal communication is the relationship that develops between the organization's human resources. It is one that should be a priority in the communication policy of the company. An organization will not be able to create a favorable image in the market or in front of his business associates as long as the staff is insufficiently informed, listened.

This article talked about communication between employees of different cultures, the necessity in a company and the success it brings good communication.

Whether we are talking about verbal or non-verbal communication is an essential component of life, the component to be understood as correctly to achieve their goals. There is no concrete definition of communication but at least it can be said that communication means intentional transmission of data information. I chose this topic because communication in an organization represents an essential role in the running and development as well as for the effective day by day exercise. In fundamentally develops relations following communication, organization and functioning and survival relies on effective relationships between individuals and groups. Communication helps individuals and groups to coordinate their activities to achieve goals and is vital in socialization processes, decision making, problem solving, and change management.

When communication is not effective in an organization, we can think to introduce human resources in a communications course suitable group that make people part with the specificities of each culture (age, nationality, culture, profession, expectations) to understand each person's way of expressing themselves, with as expected of interlocutor. After all, developing human resources the means the success of organization.

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