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Discretionary Assignment 1

Gihan Shamike Liyanage

1142109

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This paper explores how people from different cultures communicate differently, focusing on the ideas of Edward T. Hall about space and time. Hall's observations show that cultural backgrounds influence how we understand personal space and time. The goal of this paper is to compare Hall's theories with real-life situations involving different cultures. By sharing personal experiences, my aim is to provide better understanding about these differences and see how they affect our communication. Furthermore, it will help us learn how to communicate effectively across cultures.

Edward T. Hall's seminal work emphasizes how cultures diverge in their interpretations of space, time, and proximity, shaping communication patterns. In Hall's framework, high-context cultures, like many Asian cultures, rely on implicit communication, valuing nonverbal cues and shared context. These cultures often maintain close physical proximity. Conversely, low-context cultures, common in Western societies, prioritize explicit communication, relying on clear verbal expression and maintaining larger personal spaces. Hall's concept of "proxemics" delves into these spatial differences, highlighting how physical distance reflects cultural norms. For instance, crowded public transport in Japan showcases the acceptance of close proximity, contrasting with the preference for personal space seen in many Western societies. Such examples illuminate Hall's intricate vocabulary, underscoring space, and time's profound impact on intercultural communication dynamics.

I’m an international student from Sri Lanka and I've encountered numerous cultural differences, especially in terms of space and time. One notable experience was during my college in Canada is in Sri Lanka, personal space is relatively smaller, and conversations often happen at closer proximity. However, in Canada, people appreciate more personal space, and conversations occur at a comfortable distance. The perception of time also varied significantly. In Sri Lanka, there's a more relaxed attitude toward punctuality, with events often starting a bit later than scheduled. In contrast, Canada places a strong emphasis on punctuality, and schedules are strictly followed.

These differences occasionally posed challenges. Initially, I found Canadians' preference for personal space surprising and struggled with adhering to strict timelines. Misunderstandings arose in social situations due to differing expectations of proximity and timing. However, these challenges provided valuable lessons. Adapting my communication style to respect Canadians' need for personal space and punctuality became crucial. By observing and adjusting, I learned to balance my cultural background with the Canadian way of interacting, bridging the gap effectively. These encounters underscored the relevance of Edward T. Hall's observations. Understanding and respecting cultural variances in space and time became essential in fostering meaningful connections. It highlighted the importance of adaptability, patience, and cultural sensitivity, skills invaluable in navigating diverse social contexts, both in Canada and beyond. “From now on, how one arrives at a definition of the relationship of man's basic nature to his culturally conditioned control systems (extensions) is of crucial importance. For in our shrinking globe man can ill afford cultural illiteracy.” (Hall, 1989)

My experiences in Canada align with some of Hall's ideas, like the importance of personal space and punctuality. However, there are some differences as well. Understanding these nuances is vital and it shows how important it is to be culturally aware. Being sensitive to these differences helps bridge gaps between cultures, both in Canada and Sri Lanka and it emphasizes the need for empathy and understanding in effective communication across cultures.

As a conclusion this paper underscores the critical importance of comprehending cultural differences in communication. It emphasizes the significance of Edward T. Hall's observations, particularly regarding space and time, in fostering cultural awareness and effective communication skills. By delving into real-life experiences and comparing them with Hall's theories, the paper highlights the necessity of adapting communication styles to diverse cultural contexts. This adaptability not only prevents misunderstandings but also builds stronger connections between individuals from different backgrounds. In today's globalized world, where interactions span continents in seconds, intercultural communication remains profoundly relevant. Acknowledging and appreciating cultural gaps not only enriches personal experiences but also promotes harmony and understanding in an increasingly interconnected and diverse global community. Embracing these differences becomes not just a choice but a necessity for meaningful global dialogue and cooperation.

# References

(n.d.). Retrieved from https://monoskop.org/images/6/60/Hall\_Edward\_T\_Beyond\_Culture.pdf

Hall, E. T. (1989). *Beyond Culture.* New York: Anchor Books.