

Chapter 1

Culture, Communication, Intercultural Communication

文化、交际及跨文化交际

In international business, as in most other areas of life, the best idea in the world can fail if it's not communicated effectively.

文化是同一人群一代又一代共享、获得和传承的信仰、习俗、价值、行为、制度以及思维模式的总和。人类的任何一种活动，从日常生活到社会活动，无不体现某种文化：中国人在除夕之夜包饺子，美国人在感恩节制做南瓜派；中国人用筷子进食，美国人用刀叉用餐；中国人穿着唐装旗袍参加盛典，美国人穿着西装礼服出席宴会；日本人初次见面鞠躬行礼，美国人初次见面握手致意；日本人在商务谈判之初寒暄客套，美国人在正式谈判前习惯于讲述一个幽默故事，德国人丁是丁，卯是卯地执行方案；企业家从事经营管理，科学家进行科学研究或技术发明，文学家、艺术家从事创作，思想家进行思考……人总是生活在文化中，文化现象在人的世界中无所不在。文化在跨文化商务中表现得更为突出和重要，它是人们理念和价值观的直接体现，直接影响商务沟通效果。通过本章学习，你将全面了解文化的概念及特点，并对以上方方面面从文化角度有更深入的理解。

1. Culture 文化

Culture is **ubiquitous, multidimensional, and all-pervasive**, as we have it almost anywhere and anytime. It

is understood differently by people throughout the world. Americans believe that culture is a fast-moving train, which is closely connected with what is going on for the time being. The better you adjust yourself to the present world, the more you understand culture. However, Chinese people believe that culture is closely related to the past. The more you know about **Confucianism** or the past, the more cultured you are considered to be.

To the outside observers, Americans may seem like a nation of **amnesiacs**; they care more about the next big invention. To the Chinese, the past is always something to be memorized. They are always proud of having the four great inventions in ancient times.

“It is estimated that there are more than 164 definitions of culture.” (Chen, 2005) Culture can be understood in the broad sense and the narrow sense. It can be defined as attributes of man in its broad sense, including what distinguishes man from the rest part of the world. When culture is contrasted with nature, it can be defined as “life way of a population” in its narrow sense, meaning what characterizes the particular way of life of a population. For instance, corporate culture is a culture in the broad sense, as it refers to the moral, social and behavioral norms of one organization based on the beliefs, attitudes and priorities of its members. However, the slogan “quality is life” of an organization is a culture in the narrow sense, as it refers to one specific characteristic of the organization.

ubiquitous *a.*
普遍存在的
multidimensional *a.*
多方面的
all-pervasive *a.*
遍及各方面的
Confucianism *n.*
孔子学说; 儒学
amnesiac *n.*
遗忘症患者

1.1 Definitions of Culture 文化的概念

There is no agreed-upon definition of culture. Anthropologists actually have managed to give multiple answers to the question, “What is culture?” In the following, several definitions of culture from dictionaries or by scholars both in China and abroad are given for a general understanding of culture and how it is interpreted in different cultures.

Culture is “the total sum of material and spiritual wealth created by the mankind in the process of the social and historical development, especially, literature, art, science, education, etc.; the ability to use the written language and possession of book knowledge; (in archaeology) the aggregation of historical remains, relics of the same historical periods” (*The Modern Chinese Dictionary*, 1998).

Culture is “the arts and other manifestations of human intellectual achievement regarded collectively; the customs, civilizations and achievement of a particular time or people; improvement by mental or physical training” (*The Concise Oxford Dictionary*, 2001).

Culture means “material life such as material things essential for human survival; social life such as lifestyles, social organizations, and political and economic relation; spiritual life such as religion, philosophy, value systems, science and art” (Liang, 2004).

“Culture is man’s medium; there is not one aspect of human life that is not touched and altered by culture. This means personality, how people express themselves, including shows of emotion, the way they think, how they move, how problems are solved, how their cities are planned and laid out, how transportation systems function and are organized, as well as how economic and government systems are put together and function.” (Hall, 1959)

Culture is “one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language. It is a general process of intellectual, spiritual and aesthetic development; a particular way of life, whether of a people, a period or a group; the works and practices of intellectual and especially artistic activity” (Williams, 1983).

“Culture is the total accumulation of beliefs, customs, values, behaviors, institutions and communication patterns that are shared, learned and passed down through the generations in an identifiable group of people.” (Davis, 2001)

From the definitions given above we can see that culture can be actually classified into different types when viewed from different perspectives such as anthropological, psychological, cognitive, social, symbolic and linguistic. Since our goal is to focus on the interaction between people from different cultural backgrounds, we prefer the anthropological view of culture by Samovar and Porter in our study of intercultural communication. Their definition of culture well serves our purpose. They define

culture as follows:

“Culture is the deposit of knowledge, experience, beliefs, values, attitudes, meanings, hierarchies, religion, notions of time, roles, spatial relations, concepts of the universe, and material objects and possessions acquired by a group of people in the course of generations through individual and group striving. Culture can therefore include everything from rites of passage to concepts of the soul.”

Culture involves at least three components: what people think, what they do, and the material products they produce. Culture also has several properties: It is shared, learned, symbolic, adaptive, and integrated. The definition of culture by Samovar and Porter covers the three components and all the properties. Their definition helps us understand culture for the sake of intercultural communication, as we will study in this book more about “the way of life of people,” “a way of thinking, feeling, and believing,” “the learned behavior,” “a mechanism for the normative regulation of behavior” and “a set of techniques for adjusting both to the external environment and to other men.”

1.2 Metaphors for Culture 文化的比喻

Trying to define “culture” has certainly produced a torrent of results as shown in the above. It seems that we could fill up an entire volume with definitions alone. However, we can approach the complex, ill-defined nature of this abstract concept by working with metaphors, which can help us explore the dimensions of it from different approaches.

1.2.1 The Culture Iceberg 文化冰山

Just as an iceberg which has a visible section above the waterline and a larger invisible section below the waterline, culture has some aspects that are observable and others that can only be suspected and imagined. Also like an iceberg, the part of culture that is visible (observable behavior) is only a small part of a much bigger whole. It is said nine-tenths of culture is below the surface.

Culture above the waterline. Culture above the waterline means the aspects of culture that are explicit, visible, taught. This includes how we behave, what we eat, the clothes we wear, how we speak, words we use, thousands of skills and

the information conveyed through formal and informal lessons, etc. They can be understood easily and immediately when they are observed. It is said that only 10 percent of culture is visible, explicit, and taught, but this 10 percent is what we have to learn to understand, assimilate and if necessary adapt to for success while communicating with other cultures.

Mongolians are very serious and composed in their expressions. In the city, this is beginning to change slightly. You'll see a number of my students smiling. But this is not traditional. When I first came here, my friends asked me why Americans smile so much. They felt that Americans smile even at people they don't like and that was quite insincere. —Lisa Buchwalder (www.peacecorps.gov)

Culture below the waterline. Every culture, past and present, has to decide how to satisfactorily solve common human problems and concerns. What matters is the culture below the waterline, which is also called “hidden” culture: the habits, assumptions, understandings, values, judgments that we know but do not or cannot interpret in a direct way. Usually these aspects are what we encounter every day, but not taught directly.

Actually a great deal can be found below the waterline, such as concepts of beauty, justice, etc., relationships to animals, patterns of superior-subordinate relations, incentives to work, notions of leadership, tempos of work, ways of decision-making, attitudes toward dependents, approaches to problem-solving, designation based on age, sex, class, occupation, kinship, etc., nature of friendship, ordering of time, concept of self, preference for competition or cooperation, body language and notions about logic and validity and so on.

1.2.2 The Culture Onion 文化洋葱

Culture can be imagined as an onion, consisting of multiple layers.

Culture in the outer layer. Much like what has been described in the culture iceberg, the outer layer of the culture onion consists of symbols, such as the way people are dressed, the language they speak, the cars they drive, the food they eat, the houses they live in, etc. It is just what we can see and understand immediately. Such

a part of culture is like what is illustrated in the culture iceberg above the waterline.

When a foreigner is in Japan, he will discover that Japanese ladies are sometimes dressed in *kimono*, Japanese men drink *saki*, and the Japanese sleep on *futon* rather than beds. He will realize that he is in a different culture when surrounded by all these.

kimono n.

和服

saki n.

日本米酒

futon n.

蒲团, 日本式床垫

Culture in the middle layer. When we go deeper we can see something different from what is in the outer layer, something more complex than what occurs in the outer layer. It is the culture in the middle layer. The middle layer of the culture onion includes norms and values, such as greetings, respect for the tradition, etc. People in the same group usually have the same norms of behaving in order to be accepted by other group members. In Chinese culture, students are not supposed to say anything that will make their teachers feel embarrassed, especially in the past, such as difficult questions, in case their teachers lose face.

Culture in the inner nucleus layer. The inner nucleus of the culture onion concerns the invisible culture. On this level, there is much about the things rooted in people: power relationship, the value of being equal, the relationship between people, etc. For example, what is the purpose of living? It is quite accepted by the people in Japan that people “live to work.” If you work extra hours, you are praised. On the contrary, the Mexican people believe that people “work to live.” Money and work are not the most valuable things in life; spending time with friends and family is more important than working.

Actually, the three layers are closely connected and influence one another. The inner nucleus layer influences the middle layer, and then the middle layer works on the outer layer. What we can see every day is usually what is shown in the outer layer. But to understand and control the middle layer and inner nucleus layer is the goal of studying culture.

1.3 Characteristics of Culture 文化的特点

In order to better understand culture, it is useful to examine its characteristics. The following six major characteristics are generally accepted and shared around the world.

Culture is shared. Members of a culture share a set of ideals, values, and standards of behaviors, and this set is what gives meaning to their lives, and what bonds them together as a culture. For example, almost all people living in China share the Chinese language, dress themselves in similar styles, eat similar foods, and celebrate many of the same holidays or festivals. When Spring Festival comes, for example, Chinese people all over the world will celebrate it in the same way: wearing new clothes, setting off firecrackers, eating dumplings, extending good wishes for the New Year, having *antithetical couplets* on doors and hanging lanterns.

antithetical couplet
对联

Culture is learned. Culture is learned, not inherited. It derives from one's social environment, not from one's genes.

Children begin learning about their own culture at home with their immediate family. When they are growing up in the community, their cultural education is advanced by watching social interactions, taking part in cultural activities and rituals in the community, and their own relationships and their places in the culture are gradually formed. In intercultural communication, effective interpersonal skills, team effectiveness, ability to deal with cultural uncertainty and cultural empathy toward others can be learned and enhanced through intercultural communication training and practices. An open mind and a willingness to learn from experiences will help people get over communication problems and adapt to new cultures.

An American boy was born in the United States, but grew up in China, as his parents were doing business in China. He finished his primary school and junior school in China. At school he studied and played with his Chinese classmates and spoke Mandarin. But he spoke English with his parents at home. What troubled his parents most was that his thinking and behaviors were just identical to a Chinese boy's, which often made his communication with his parents difficult.

The story of the American boy shows culture is not inborn or intrinsic. Surrounded by the Chinese culture, he learned many solutions to certain problems that the Chinese culture sets for him. Once these solutions were learned, his behaviors became automatic.

Culture is symbolic. People have culture primarily because it enables them to communicate with symbols. Symbols allow people to develop complex thoughts and to exchange those thoughts with others. Language and other forms of symbolic communication, such as art, enable people to create, explain, and record new ideas and information. In China, children usually give senior parents a birthday cake with a large peach in it on their birthday, wishing that they will live as long as possible. The cake here is called Good-health Cake, a symbol of good health and longevity.

A piece of red cloth or even two or three pieces of red cloth can often be seen hanging or tied on cars in China. When the drivers are asked for the reasons, they will tell you that it's for the sake of safety. In Chinese culture red color is a symbol used for driving out evils or misfortune.

Cultural symbols can take various forms, e.g., spoken word(s), handwritten or printed word(s) or picture(s), nonverbal actions, objects, etc. In China, the Great Wall is a great symbol to the Chinese. The Great Wall is not only a wall, but a symbol of greatness, which is well illustrated in the poem by Mao Zedong, "He who does not climb the Great Wall is not a true man." It is almost a dream of every Chinese to climb the Great Wall in their life. Similarly, in the United States, the Statue of Liberty is a symbol of American freedom to Americans, and is among the most recognized symbols worldwide.

Culture is integrated. To keep the culture functioning, all aspects of the culture must be integrated. Such an integration of culture is like a big tree: Some aspects of the culture are the roots, some are the branches, some are the leaves and some are the fruits. For example, the language must be able to describe all the functions within the culture in order for ideas to be transmitted from one person to another. Without the integration of language into the fabric of culture, confusion and dysfunction would reign and culture would fail.

Culture is dynamic. Culture is subject to change. It's dynamic rather than static, constantly changing and evolving under the impact of events and through contact with other cultures. It changes through three most common mechanisms: innovation, *diffusion* and *acculturation*.

diffusion *n.*
传播
acculturation *n.*
文化适应

Innovation or cultural innovation refers to the introduction of new thoughts, norms, or material items from a different culture, such as the slogan “Time is money.” Diffusion is the spreading of cultural items from one culture to another. For example, Hollywood movies are popular with people throughout the world, and more and more Chinese people have begun to know more about the U.S. through these movies. Acculturation is the process which adopts the changes brought about by another culture and develops an increased similarity between the two cultures. Take business in China as an example. About 20 years ago, many Chinese businesspeople put friendship first rather than abiding by business rules. With so many foreign companies set up in the country, many Chinese businesspeople have gradually changed their ways of managing business. They have become in favor of the international standard or practice that business is business, friendship is friendship.

Culture is *ethnocentric*. Ethnocentrism is the belief that your own cultural background, including ways of analyzing problems, values, beliefs, language, etc., is superior. Ethnocentrism is the tendency to look at the world primarily from the perspective of one’s own culture. Ethnocentrists believe their culture is the central culture and other cultures are incorrect, ineffective, or *quaint*. They may take it for granted that their own cultural behaviors are the standard ones and different behaviors are *alien*.

ethnocentric a. 种族(民族)中心主义的 quaint a. 古怪的 alien a. 异己的; 不相容的

2. Communication 交际

Communication, the basis of all human contact, occurs wherever there are human beings. When a baby is born, it cries. The crying is communication. When you achieve your goal, your friends come and say, “Congratulations!” The word “congratulations” is communication. When you run into a friend on your way to school in the morning, you greet him, “Good morning!” The expression “good morning” is communication.

2.1 Definitions of Communication 交际的概念

It is as difficult to define communication as it is to define culture. The American scholars, Dance and Larson (1972), in their book *Speech Communication: Concepts*

and Behavior, found 126 definitions of communication after they reviewed the literature on communication. There are two reasons why it is not easy to locate a single definition of communication: One is the complex nature of communication, the other is the controversy over intentionality versus unintentionality. (Samovar & Porter, 2003) Some people believe that communication is the process by which people deliberately attempt to convey meanings to others. However, others hold that communication is unintentional, as they think communication is much like culture and occurs without awareness.

In the following, several definitions of communication are listed to show how difficult it is to “locate a single definition of communication” and also how closely communication is related with culture.

“Communication is a dynamic, systematic process in which meanings are created and reflected in human interaction with symbols.” (Wood, 1994)

“Communication includes all methods of conveying any kind of thought or feeling between people.” (Samovar & Mills, 1998)

“Communication requires coding and symbols that must be learned and shared.” (Smith, 1966)

“Every cultural pattern and every single act of social behavior involves communication.” (Chu, 1977)

“Communication is a process by which information is exchanged between individuals through a common system of symbols, signs, or behavior, or the exchange of thoughts, messages, or information, as by speech, signals, writing, or behavior.” (Coleman, 2005)

“Communication may be defined as that which happens whenever someone responds to the behavior or the residue of the behavior of another person.” (Du, 2004)

“Culture cannot be known without a study of communication, and communication can only be understood with an understanding of the culture it supports.” (Zhuang, 2004)

Generally speaking, communication can be defined as a dynamic, symbolic, transactional and contextual process in which people create shared meanings or messages.

Communication is dynamic, because communication is an ongoing and ever changing activity. In any communication event, the sender and the receiver of the

messages constantly shift from being encoders to decoders and the messages also change in each turn of interaction.

Communication is symbolic, because symbols are central to the communication process. They represent the shared meanings that are communicated. A symbol is a word, action, or object that stands for a unit of meaning. Meaning, in turn, is a perception, thought, or feeling that a person experiences and might want to communicate with others.

Communication is transactional, because each person encodes and sends messages, and in turn receives and decodes messages. The coding and decoding process is primarily culture-based and involves a diverse set of elements, including words, gestures, symbols, etc.

Communication is contextual, because all communication takes place within a specific context. The context includes the place where people meet, the social purpose for being together, and the nature of the relationship. In other words, context includes both physical and social settings within which messages are exchanged.

2.2 Business Communication 商务沟通

There are quite a number of books on business communication, but none of them can provide a single definition of business communication. Business communication does have its specific application, which differs to a certain degree from other forms of communication. However, they share something in common. In the previous pages, we have explored much about communication and its definitions, which can help us better understand the definition of business communication.

“Business communication is a dynamic, multi-channeled process, which covers internal as well as external communication in a given organization.” (Xu, 2001) Such a description is tentative in nature but includes all the essential elements of communication. A dynamic and multi-channeled process shows that the communication is performed in various changeable ways. Internal communication refers to the kind of communication that takes place within a given organization, whereas external communication refers to communication between the organization and other institutions and parties. And an organization refers to an administrative and functional structure such as a company or corporation.

Actually, we have to learn a lot in order to be effective in business communication. We have to be skilled at dealing with what is always involved in business communication. Can we resolve conflicts effectively? Can we choose the best words and voice for our audience? Can we craft persuasive business letters? Can we overcome our fears of public speaking? Can we present ourselves professionally in an interview? In a word, can we incorporate active listening, assertive speaking, and nonverbal communication techniques into our daily communication?

2.3 Patterns of Communication 沟通方式

As to patterns of communication, there are more than 10 kinds from different points of views, but here we will focus on only three in terms of directions in business context: upward communication, downward communication, and lateral communication.

Upward communication. “Upward communication is the communication flowing from subordinates to superiors, usually concerning employees’ comments about themselves, their reactions about others, their reactions to practices and policies, and their thoughts about their work.” (Andrews & Herschel, 1996) In other words, it means sending information from people at a lower level to people at a higher level in an organization, e.g. subordinates may report working progress or problems to their managers. Upward communication is extremely important to business success, particularly in organizations undergoing changes. It allows upper level managers to keep informed of the organization’s concrete progress and problems. It gives lower level employees the opportunity to participate in the decision-making process in the company. Sometimes, it is not easy to have employees voice their opinions, as they are often troubled by the following questions: Should I tell the manager what I really think or should I cater for his preference? Should I tell the whole story about what has happened or just part of it?

Downward communication. “Downward communication is the communication flowing from the top of the organizational management *hierarchy*, telling people in the organization what is important (mission) and what is valued (policy).” (Andrews & Herschel, 1996) Simply speaking, it means information flowing from people at a higher level to

hierarchy <i>n.</i> 等级制度

people at a lower level in an organization. Downward communication includes giving instructions, speeches, meetings, objectives or rules. Downward communication comes naturally because communication to less empowered individuals in the company is nonthreatening to those in control, and builds a sense of team spirit and mutual dependence through shared knowledge. However, downward communication may lead to a sense of expectation on the part of lower level employees to be informed of all company matters, however sensitive they are. Some more examples of downward communication are notices, circulars, orders, letters, memos, bulletins, handbooks, annual reports, and loudspeaker announcements.

Lateral communication (or horizontal communication). “Lateral communication or horizontal communication refers to the communication at the same level in an organization. Horizontal communication is usually characterized by its informality, closeness and speed, i.e. employees at the same level often exchange information, the latest news, comments and so on to each other in a casual way, fast and reliable.” (Xu, 2001) It helps to create social bonds between employees. It is also a powerful force in preventing *turnover* and *disruptive* behavior and it can build credibility for company messages since they are transmitted between equals rather than from the upper level who might be seen as having *ulterior* motives.

turnover *n.*
人员更换, 流动
disruptive *a.*
分裂性的
ulterior *a.*
隐秘的
grievance *n.*
不满, 不平

The importance of free-flowing forthright communications, both downward from management to employees and upward from employees to management, can hardly be overemphasized. Whether it is to support morale and productivity among the workforce or to assure that management takes advantage of employee input, good communications are essential. Where downward communication is poor, rumors and misinformation will spread around. Where upward communication is poor, employee *grievances* will drive down morale and productivity and increase vulnerability to union organizing.

2.4 Communication and Culture 交际与文化

Communication systems such as language and nonverbal communication are products of culture. So interconnected are communication and culture that some scholars have been led to use them interchangeably: “Culture is communication” and “communication is culture” (Varner & Beamer, 2006).

As the basic building blocks of communication, words communicate meaning, but very often the meanings of words are very much influenced by the people who speak them. Meaning is in the person, not in the word, as each person is the product of a particular culture that passes on shared and appropriate meanings. Thus, if we want to learn to communicate well in one language, we must understand the culture that gives that language meaning. In other words, culture and communication are inseparably linked. You can't have one without the other. Culture gives meaning and provides the context for communication, and the ability to communicate allows us to act out our cultural values and to share our language and culture.

Communication is very closely connected with culture. In reality, almost every aspect of human life is affected by the seemingly *omnipresent* culture. The clothes we wear, the way we decorate our homes, the car we drive, the way we address people, the jobs we choose, all these things communicate different things to different people, and they may communicate more than we intend to. It depends on how the receiver of the message sees, thinks and feels what the sender says, thinks, and feels.

3. Intercultural Communication 跨文化交际

Today, success in local, national, or international business means making sure the diversity of voices, cultures, and know-how in the workplace are recognized and understood. In the past, the wandering *nomads*, religious *missionaries*, and conquering warriors encountered people of different cultures. These contacts were intercultural communication. Nowadays, people from different countries meet in Beijing, New York, London, Tokyo, or Paris for exchanges every day. When they meet and talk, intercultural

omnipresent	a.
无所不在的	
nomad	n.
游牧民	
missionary	n.
传教士	

communication occurs. Foreigners come to China for business, educational exchange or entertainment. Meanwhile, Chinese people go to foreign countries for the same purposes. Without doubt, these exchanges are intercultural communication.

3.1 Definitions of Intercultural Communication

跨文化交际概念

There are several frequently used terms for the study of intercultural communication. Such terms as intercultural, international, cross-cultural and multicultural are often used interchangeably. On one level, the study of intercultural communication is represented by culture studies, where we examine the political, economic and lifestyle systems of other countries. On another level, it is part of applied linguistics, where we seek to understand the relationship between language and culture. The following definitions are presented or interpreted by some experts in their books.

“In its most general sense, intercultural communication means the communication between people from different cultural backgrounds. As the term suggests, intercultural communication occurs when a member of one culture produces a message for consumption by a member of another culture. More precisely, intercultural communication is communication between people whose cultural perceptions and symbol systems are distinct enough to alter the communication event.” (Samovar, 2003)

“Intercultural communication is contact between persons who identify themselves as distinct from one another in cultural terms.” (Collier & Thomas, 1998)

“The functions and relationships between the components of communication obviously apply, but what especially characterizes intercultural communication is that sources and responders come from different cultures.” (Zhuang, 2004)

In reality, the term “intercultural communication” was first used by Edward T. Hall in 1959. One of the first researchers to differentiate cultures based on how information is sent and received, Hall simply defines intercultural communication as communication between persons of different cultures. And Hu Wenzhong, a well-known professor of intercultural communication in China, defines

intercultural communication as communication between people of different cultural backgrounds. To be specific, the study of intercultural communication is a comprehensive attempt to understand all aspects of human cultures and how they interact with each other.

A group of American business people arrived in Beijing for business. They started to work the next day; they held negotiations with the Chinese businesspeople and signed contracts finally. After they finished their business, they went to the Great Wall, the Summer Palace and the Tian'anmen Square, where they met the local people and chatted with them about what they were interested in. They had intercultural communication with the local people all the way through their stay in China.

In order to better understand the relationship between culture and communication, we'd better study both of them together. Culture cannot be known without a study of communication, and communication can only be understood with an understanding of the culture it supports.

3.2 Barriers in Intercultural Communication

跨文化交际障碍

Misunderstanding comes from superficial differences as well as differences in structures of cultures. There are times we meet people with backgrounds different from our own, e.g. we negotiate a major contract with a foreign businessman, we discuss a large project with a foreign company, we are supervised by someone of a different nation, we counsel a young student from another country, we work alongside someone who does not speak our language. Then differences in language, food, dress, attitudes toward time, work habits, social behavior, and the like can cause many of our communications to be frustrating or even unsuccessful. These are only superficial differences. The deep structure of a culture, however, is often what determines how a person responds to events and other people. What members of a particular culture value and how they perceive the universe are usually far more important than whether

they eat with chopsticks, their hands, or metal *utensils*. (Samovar & Porter, 2000)

The need to understand significant differences in social relations, concepts of the universe, and views of suffering is a major theme for studying intercultural communication. We encounter some barriers while communicating across cultures. Such intercultural barriers keep us from achieving our goal in international communication. Hofstede (2002) lists five main barriers in five areas, which can help us have a better idea of the barriers we have in intercultural communication, and thus, overcome them.

utensil *n.*
器具

Language differences. Language learning is not only the learning of new vocabulary and grammar, but also the acquisition of culture competence: knowing what to say and how, when, where, and why to say it. Even within the same language, the same word may be understood in different ways in different settings. In order to overcome the linguistic barrier in intercultural communication, the communicators have to have a good mastery of the foreign language and ask for clarification when we are puzzled.

Nonverbal communication. Nonverbal gestures, postures, etc. can create serious barriers. People of the same cultural background have no difficulty understanding them, but people from different countries might feel at sea. Lack of eye contact communicates embarrassment or insecurity over the words we are saying in some cultures. Or seemingly innocent acts like making the “V” sign with one’s fingers are regarded insulting, thus creating barriers to communication. To cross the nonverbal communication barriers, we have to remember the following points: Don’t use the nonverbal communication signs until we are familiar with them and remind ourselves that our nonverbal communication signs might always be different from those of other cultures.

Stereotypes. Stereotypes, like culture, are learned in a variety of ways. They are the products of limited, lazy, and misguided perceptions. Often, we try to fit people into patterns based on our previous experience. To Chinese businesspeople, Western businesspeople are so serious about business that they won’t make changes easily in negotiation. And to Western businesspeople, the Chinese take friendship and relations so seriously that they neglect business rules sometimes. To get rid of such a barrier, we have to know about other cultures as much as possible and make all our efforts

to increase awareness of our own preconceptions and the stereotypes of cultures we encounter.

Cultural bias on judgments. People usually have the tendency to evaluate behavior from other cultures as good or bad, to make judgments based on their own cultural bias. At table, Westerners prefer knives and forks to chopsticks, while Chinese people use chopsticks rather than knives and forks. Both of them may think that their tools are superior. To decrease such a tendency, we had better try to remember that we cannot judge someone from another culture by our own cultural values, but we have firstly to know them and understand their cultural values.

High level of stress. We usually have a high level of stress that typically accompanies intercultural communication. Like every other unfamiliar experience, intercultural contact is likely to create stress. When we are in a social group to which we do not belong, we are likely to feel uncomfortable. We are not sure about our words and behavior, and hesitate to give responses. To relieve these kinds of stress, we'd better work hard to remove intercultural barriers, and be tolerant of others and ourselves, as neither of us is familiar to the new cultural context.

3.3 Communication in the Global Village

地球村中的交际

Not only the variety of written and spoken languages, but cultural boundaries and ethnic differences, can create problems when it comes to doing international business. However, to our surprise and pleasure, the world that we understand is rapidly becoming a much smaller place. Technology is rapidly bringing us to places we have never been before. Thanks to widespread globalization, and the explosive growth and use of the Internet, people are uniting and communicating in ways they never dreamed of two decades ago.

In the global village our neighbors will no longer be like us. Our neighbors will be those who speak different languages, who have different values and different lifestyles. Instead of staying at home, we will travel more freely across national and cultural borders.

It is said that technology has broken down cultural boundaries. Technological

advances have resulted in a greater exchange of people between nations and more frequent contact with other cultures. In addition, Technological advances have made it necessary to learn to coexist with people different from us and thus make the world smaller. In other words, phones, computers, the Internet, planes, etc. have brought people from different cultures closer to each other, at least physically.

As a member of the global village, we need to take action for the survival of it. We need to identify the norms that govern face-to-face relations and “the rule books of meaning” that distinguish one culture from another. We need to understand how other cultures perceive the world and know the assumptions and values that are the foundation of these perceptions. We need to have a better understanding of the worldview and the communication style of other cultures. By doing so, we can maintain constructive relationships with societies that operate according to a different logic than our own. Communication is successful when the communicators reach some kind of understanding, which is a measure of communicative success. (Barnlund, 2007)

Summary

Culture and Communication

1. Culture is the total accumulation of beliefs, customs, values, behaviors, institutions and communication patterns that are shared, learned and passed down through the generations in an identifiable group of people.
2. Only the outward symbols of a culture, 10 percent, are easily visible. The most important aspects of culture, 90 percent, its norms and values, are far more difficult to grasp. These more profound cultural differences can cause problems when communicating with someone from another culture.
3. Culture has six major characteristics: shared, learned, symbolic, integrated, dynamic, and ethnocentric.
4. Communication is a process by which information is exchanged between individuals through a common system of symbols, signs, or behavior, or the exchange of thoughts, messages, or information, as by speech, signals, writing, or behavior.

5. There are three business communication patterns in terms of direction: upward communication, downward communication, and lateral communication.
6. Culture and communication are inseparably linked. Culture gives meaning and provides the context for communication. Besides, meaning is in the person, not in the word.

Intercultural Communication

1. Intercultural communication is the communication between persons of different cultures, or different cultural backgrounds.
2. There are five barriers in intercultural communication: language differences, nonverbal communication, stereotypes, cultural bias on judgments, and high level of stress.
3. Technology has broken down cultural boundaries, and the world is becoming a global village, in which neighbors speak different languages, have different values and different lifestyles. Understanding is a measure of communicative success in the global village.

Exercises

I. Matching the terms with their definitions.

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| A. culture | B. communication | C. ethnocentrism |
| D. horizontal communication | E. intercultural communication | |
| F. business communication | | |

1. () The belief that your own cultural background, including ways of analyzing problems, values, beliefs, language, and verbal and nonverbal communication, is superior.
2. () The total accumulation of beliefs, customs, values, behaviors, institutions and communication patterns that are shared, learned and passed down through the generations in an identifiable group of people.
3. () A process by which information is exchanged between individuals through a