

## Lecture 1

### BASIC NOTIONS OF CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION

1. The concept of cross-cultural communication.
2. Cross-cultural communication as a field of study of: anthropology, psychology, linguistics, communication and cultural studies.
3. Communication as process. Language as a powerful means of communication.
4. The concept of culture.
5. Communication types: direct and indirect communication.
6. Pragmatics of communication.
7. The basic units of verbal communication: texts and speech acts.

#### *Cross-cultural communication*

Cross-cultural communication refers to interpersonal communication and interaction across different cultures. This has become an important issue in our age of globalization and internationalization. Effective cross-cultural communication is concerned with overcoming cultural differences across nationality, religion, borders, culture and behavior. The term *cross-cultural* generally used to describe comparative studies of cultures.

Culture is the basic concept of cross-cultural communication. Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary defines *culture* as '*the integrated pattern of human knowledge, belief and behavior that depends upon man's capacity for learning and transmitting knowledge to succeeding generations*'. Another usage in the same dictionary stresses the social aspect of culture and defines it as '*the customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits of a racial, religious or social group*'.

The OED, in a similar vein, states that culture is '*a particular form, stage, or type of intellectual development or civilization in a society; a society or group characterized by its distinctive customs, achievements, products, outlook, etc.*' It almost goes without saying that there can hardly be any learning or transmitting knowledge or intellectual development without language. Nor can a society or a group function without language.

Culture not only dictates who talks what, to whom, how, and why, but also helps to determine how communication proceeds, and how messages transmit the intended meanings.

Cross-cultural communication — the comparison of communication across cultures. Although cross-cultural communication needs:

#### ✓ *Listening Skills*

Their emphasis usually lies on being a competent speaker, listening is a key skill that many business personnel do not exercise enough. For cross-cultural communication, attentive listening is critical to be able to understand meanings, read between the lines and enable to empathize with the speaker.

#### ✓ *Speaking Skills*

Listening and speaking must work in tandem for effective cross-cultural communication. Speaking well is not about accent, use of grammar and vocabulary or having the gift of the gab. Rather, cross-cultural communication is enhanced through positive speech such as encouragement, affirmation, recognition and phrasing requests clearly or expressing opinions sensitively.

✓ *Observation*

Large amounts of cross-cultural information can be read in people's dress, body language, interaction and behavior. Be aware of differences with your own culture and try to understand the roots of behaviors. Asking questions expands your cross-cultural knowledge.

✓ *Patience*

People need to recognize and understand that sometimes cross-cultural differences are annoying and frustrating. In these situations, patience is definitely a virtue. Through patience, respect is won, and cross-cultural understanding is enhanced.

✓ *Flexibility*

Flexibility, adaptability and open-mindedness are the route to successful cross-cultural communication. Understanding, embracing and addressing cross-cultural differences leads to the breaking of cultural barriers, which results in better lines of communication, mutual trust and creative thinking.

Following these five cross-cultural communication needs will allow us to improve lines of communication and better cross-cultural awareness and successful cross-cultural relationships.

***Cross-cultural communication as a field of study of: anthropology, psychology, linguistics, communication and cultural studies***

*Cross-cultural communication* (also frequently referred to as intercultural communication) is a field of study that looks at how people from differing cultural backgrounds try to communicate.

*Cross-cultural communication* as a field of study is a combination of many other scholarly fields. These fields include anthropology, psychology, linguistics, communication and cultural studies. The term *culture* is taken from anthropology, wherein it embraces the entire way of life of members of a community insofar as it is conditioned by that membership. Anthropologists most commonly use the term "*culture*" to refer to the universal human capacity to classify, to codify and communicate their experiences symbolically.

*Linguistic anthropology* is the comparative study of ways in which language reflects and influences social life. It explores the many ways in which language practices define patterns of communication, formulate categories of social identity and group membership, organize large-scale cultural beliefs and ideologies, and, in conjunction with other forms of meaning-making, equip people with common cultural representations of their natural and social worlds.

*Psychology* studies human behavior. Psychological applications of cross- cultural / multicultural communications work on the primes that all human beings essentially communicate on similar definable levels, and these definitions can be predictable and applied to cultivate a “Borderless Communication Foundation”. Psycholinguistics or psychology of language is the study of the psychological and neurobiological factors that enable humans to acquire, use, comprehend and produce language. Language and our thought-grooves are inextricably interwoven, are, in a sense, one and the same. As there is nothing to show that there are significant racial differences in the fundamental conformation of thought, it follows that the infinite variability of linguistic form, another name for the infinite variability of the actual process of thought, cannot be an index of such significant racial differences.

*Linguistics* is the scientific study of human language. Linguistics can be broadly broken into three categories or subfields of study: language form, language meaning, and language in context. Linguistics is concerned largely with finding and describing the generalities and varieties both within particular languages and among all languages that are powerful means of cross-cultural communications. There are two fields of linguistics, which are essential for cross-cultural communication. They are ethnolinguistics and sociolinguistics.

*Ethnolinguistics or cultural linguistics* is a field of linguistics, which studies the relationship between language and culture, and the way different ethnic groups perceive the world. It is the combination between ethnology and linguistics. The former refers to the way of life of an entire community i.e. all the characteristics which distinguish one community from the other. Those characteristics make the cultural aspects of a community or a society.

*Communication studies* is an academic field that deals with processes of communication, commonly defined as the sharing of symbols over distances in space and time. Communication is a fundamental process by which patterns in a medium move through time and space. Communication ensures continuity in the development of culture. Every new generation begins its work of learning from the point where the previous generation left off.

*Cultural studies* is an academic discipline which combines political economy, communication, sociology, social theory, literary theory, media theory, film/video studies, cultural anthropology, philosophy, museum studies and art history/criticism to study cultural phenomena in various societies.

### ***Communication as process***

Communication arose and developed with the rise of man and the formation of society in the process of labor.

*Communication* is a process, whereby information is enclosed in a package, channeled and imparted by a sender to a receiver via some medium. The receiver then decodes the message and gives the sender a feedback.

Communication requires that all parties have an area of communicative commonality. There are auditory means, such as speech, song, and tone of voice, and there are nonverbal means, such as body language, sign language, paralanguage, touch, eye contact, through media, i.e., pictures, graphics and sound, and writing.

Communication processes of information transmission are governed by three levels of semiotic rules: syntactic (formal properties of signs and symbols); pragmatic (concerned with the relations between signs/expressions and their users); semantic (study of relationships between signs and symbols and what they represent).

Communication is interactive, so an important influence on its effectiveness is our relationship with others. Communication is social interaction where at least two interacting agents share a common set of signs and a common set of semiotic rules. We do most of our communicating using speech and our understanding of speech to greet people and tell them our news, to ask and answer questions, and to use the telephone.

Communication is extremely diverse in its forms. Communication as the art of transmitting information, ideas and attitudes from one person to another, may be verbal and nonverbal. Communication types are differentiated according to communication channels. These are means available to communicate with another person or group. They may include direct face-to-face communication, telecommunications (telephone, e-mail, written communications), or indirect communication – through third parties or the media, for example.

Direct Communication takes place when people say what they mean, when the idea of saving face is not of major consequence in most situations, when silence in conversations is viewed as uncomfortable and interruptions are common. Direct communicators believe that it is better to say what needs to be said. Groups that prefer a direct style of communicating focus on the explicit meaning of words, similar to low context cultures. The popular saying, *"You can take my words to the bank"* conveys a belief that individuals say exactly what they mean. Americans, Germans, and Israelis, are direct communicators, each having varying degrees of directness. People who are direct communicators use clear, definitive statements, participate actively in meetings, make their points with conviction, they are comfortable telling others what to do, using words like *"should"*, *"have to"*. They tell others why their ideas should be adopted.

Indirect communication is when meaning is not only in the words, but also mainly in the surrounding context of a conversation. Indirect communication takes place when people imply what they mean; reading into things is the definitive way of communicating, when saving face and maintaining harmony is paramount, when silence in conversations is expected and appreciated and interruptions are to be avoided. Indirect communicators ask many questions. They quietly observe in meetings, offer suggestions for consideration, like to get others involved in discussions, use words like *"maybe"*, *"possibly"* and ask others to consider their ideas. There is an opinion that *"Indirect communicators do not believe everything needs to be said. They are often part of a culture that is more group-focused rather than individual-focused. Because of this, they live within societal norms that are different and less focused on individual needs. An important goal of their conversational style is to maintain harmony, or at least the appearance of harmony. Therefore, not everything is said, but rather, much can be implied."*

Individuals who prefer an indirect communication style will avoid dealing directly with conflict. Examples of indirect communicators are most of the countries: in Asia; the Middle East; Africa; and South America.

What do direct and indirect communicators think of each other? Direct communicators think indirect communicators: Indirect communicators think direct communicators: are evasive are insensitive are dishonest have no tact and are boorish cannot take a stand are insulting have no opinion are harsh increase tension by not dealing with issues directly increase tension by dealing with issues in a direct manner.

### ***Language as a powerful means of communication***

Thanks to communication the individual's thoughts and aspirations not obliterated by time. They are in words, images; they survive in legend and passed on from century to century. Language is a powerful means of communication. In life, communication does not exist as an isolated process or independent form of activity. It is included in individual or group practical activities realized within intensive and comprehensive dialogue with the help of language.

Language is the development of the basic form of communication between human beings, and in a society.

Language may refer either to the specifically human capacity for acquiring and using complex systems of communication or to a specific instance of such a system of complex communication. Communication is unmanageable without primary language skills or “the mode or manner in which language is used. Listening, speaking, reading, and writing — the four language skills. Sometimes speaking and writing are called the active/productive skills and reading and listening, the passive/receptive skills.”

We begin to learn the words when we need to express ourselves, when we are less than a year old and store them in our brains in a „mental dictionary’. In this way, we can understand words when we hear them and say them when we need to. We also learn the rules for putting words together into sentences as well as how to use letters and write them down.

According to Britannica Concise Encyclopedia, language is a system of conventional spoken or written symbols used by people in a shared culture to communicate with each other. A language both reflects and affects a culture's way of thinking, and changes in a culture influence the development of its language. Language is fundamental to a huge range of human activities, whether you're sitting and thinking, interacting with others at a social event, reading a book, working out why an advert is funny — and the rest. When language is used, ideas are shared, and important information is passed between individuals verbally.

### ***The concept of culture***

*Culture* is the basic concept of cross-cultural communication.

*Culture* not only dictates who talks what, to whom, how, and why, but also helps to determine how communication proceeds and messages are encoded to transmit the intended meanings.

*Culture* is 'the integrated pattern of human knowledge, belief and behavior that depends upon man's capacity for learning and transmitting knowledge to succeeding generations.'

*Culture* 'the customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits of a racial, religious or social group'. The term *culture* is taken from the technical vocabulary of anthropology, wherein it embraces the entire way of life of members of a community insofar as it is conditioned by that membership.

The term *culture* refers to all the learned and not given by nature characteristics common to a particular group of people. It is defined as:

- ✓ Way of life, especially general customs and beliefs of a particular group of people at a particular time (e.g. Youth / working-class / Russian / Roman / mass culture).
- ✓ Ideas, customs, and art that are produced or shared by a particular society (e.g., He was a fervent admirer of Roman and Greek culture...).
- ✓ A particular society or civilization, especially one considered in relation to its ideas, its art, or its way of life (e.g. the rich history of African civilizations and cultures).
- ✓ A system of communication, which consists of a set of sounds and written symbols used by the people of a particular country or region for talking or writing.

Primary cultural dimensions are:

- Patterns of thought – common ways of thinking, where thinking includes factual beliefs, values, norms, and emotional attitudes.
- Patterns of behavior – common ways of behaving, from ways of speaking to ways of conducting commerce and industry, where the behavior can be intentional/unintentional, aware/unaware or individual/interactive.
- Patterns of artifacts – common ways of manufacturing and using material things, from pens to houses, where artifacts include dwellings, tools, machines or media. The artifactual dimension of culture usually given special attention in museums.
- Imprints in nature – the long lasting imprints left by a group in the natural surroundings, where such imprints include agriculture, trash, roads or intact/ruined human habitations.

### ***Pragmatics and the basic units of verbal communication: texts and speech acts***

*Pragmatics* encompasses speech act theory, conversational implicature, talk in interaction and other approaches to language behavior in philosophy, sociology, and linguistics. It studies how the transmission of meaning depends not only on the linguistic knowledge (e.g. grammar, lexicon etc.) of the speaker and listener, but also on the context of the utterance, knowledge about the status of those involved, the inferred intent of the speaker, and so on.

In this respect, pragmatics explains how language users are able to overcome apparent ambiguity, since meaning relies on the manner, place, time etc. of an utterance. The ability to understand another speaker's intended meaning called *pragmatic competence*.

*Speech act* is a technical term in linguistics and the philosophy of language. It can be defined as an utterance, in terms of a speaker's intention, and the effect it has on a listener.

A common example of a speech act is when a priest says, "*I now pronounce you man and wife*" in a marriage ceremony and thereby enacts a marriage contract. When we speak, our words do not have meanings in and of themselves. They are very much affected by the situation, the speaker and the listener. Thus, words alone do not have a simple fixed meaning. *Speech acts* are communicative acts performed through the oral or written use of language.

*Speech Act Theory*, pioneered by John Langshaw Austin and further developed by John R. Searle, centers around the idea of the performative, a type of utterance that performs the very action it describes. Speech act theory broadly explains utterances as having three parts or aspects: *locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary acts*.

*Locutionary act* is the act of using a referring expression (e.g., a noun phrase) and a predicating expression (e.g., a verb phrase) to express a proposition. For instance, in the utterance "*You should stop smoking*", the referring expression is *you* and the predicating expression is *stop smoking*. According to John L. Austin's doctrine in performing a *locutionary act*, we shall also perform such an act as:

- ✓ asking or answering a question;
- ✓ giving some information or an assurance or a warning - announcing a verdict or an intention;
- ✓ pronouncing sentence;
- ✓ making an appointment or an appeal or a criticism;
- ✓ identifying or giving a description.

*Illocutionary act* is the performance of an act in saying something (vs. the general act of saying something). An illocutionary act is a complete speech act, made in a typical utterance, that consists of the delivery of the propositional content of the utterance (including references and a predicate), and a particular illocutionary force, whereby the speaker asserts, suggests, demands, promises, or vows. The illocutionary force is the speaker's intent as in a true '*speech act*', e.g., informing, ordering, warning, undertaking, greeting (in saying, "*Hi John!*", for instance), apologizing ("*Sorry for that!*"), describing something ("*It is snowing*"), asking a question ("*Is it snowing?*"), making a request and giving an order ("*Could you pass the salt?*" and "*Drop your weapon or I'll shoot you!*"), or making a promise ("*I promise I'll give it back*") are typical examples of "speech acts" or "illocutionary acts". An elementary speech act consists of a propositional content and an illocutionary force. Illocutionary force concerns the act the speaker intends to do in performing the speech act.

*Perlocutionary acts* are speech acts that have an effect on the feelings, thoughts or actions of either the speaker or the listener. In other words, they seek to change minds! Unlike locutionary acts, perlocutionary acts are external to the performance: inspiring, persuading or deterring.

*The further development of the theory by J. R. Searle* states that speaking a language is performing speech acts, acts such as making statements, giving commands, asking questions, making promises, and so on. He offers four basic categories of speech acts:

utterances, propositional utterances, illocutionary utterances and perlocutionary utterances. These are not separate and independent of one another.

*An utterance* is a spoken word or string of spoken words. At the simplest level, to utter is simply to say a word with no particular forethought or intention to communicate a meaning: a brown cat.

*Propositional utterances* need not be sentences, and they do not have to intend anything. Any phrase that identifies or specifies something is a propositional utterance.

*An illocutionary utterance* is spoken with the intention of making contact with a listener. Illocutionary utterances are usually sentences that contain propositional utterances, that is, they refer to things in the world – but it is their intentional nature that of the most importance. Illocutionary speech acts may be intended to provide information, solicit answers to questions, give praise, and so on, but they don't necessarily require that the listener change his or her behavior.

*Perlocutionary utterances*, on the other hand, do attempt to effect a change. As with the others, perlocutionary speech acts are utterances; they include propositions, and they intend interaction with the receiver.

Furthermore, J.R. Searle in his book *Speech Acts* identifies five illocutionary/perlocutionary points:

*Assertives* are the statements judged as true or false because they describe a state of affairs in the world.

*Directives* are statements that attempt to make the other person's actions fit the propositional content.

*Commissives* are statements that make the speaker commit to a course of action as described by the propositional content.

*Expressives* are statements used to express the “sincerity condition of the speech act”.

*Declaratives* are statements that attempt to change the world by “representing it as having been changed”.

Therefore, the illocutionary force and the propositional content of a speech act determine conditions of success and satisfaction in verbal communication. In addition, we can say that the study of speech acts has illuminated social language interactions. It covers things that semantics has overlooked and has given new insights into written and oral texts understanding.

### ***Language and culture***

Language is a complex code, broadly constructed and extensively shared, that allows a group of human beings to communicate their thoughts to one another. A major advantage of human language being a learned symbolic communication system is that it is infinitely flexible. Meanings can be changed and new symbols can be created. This is evidenced by the fact, that new words invented daily and the meaning of old ones changes. This allows us to respond linguistically to major environmental, historical, and social changes.



Language does not exist apart from culture, that is, from the socially inherited assemblage of practices and beliefs that determines the texture of our lives. Culture (from the Latin *cultura* stemming from *colere*, meaning "to cultivate,") generally refers to patterns of human activity and the symbolic structures that give such activities significance and importance.

Different definitions of "*culture*" reflect different theoretical bases for understanding, or criteria for evaluating, human activity.

*Culture* can be defined as all the behaviors, arts, beliefs and institutions of a population that are passed down from generation to generation.

*Culture* has been called "*the way of life for an entire society.*" As such, it includes codes of manners, dress, language, religion, rituals, norms of behavior such as law and morality, and systems of belief as well as the arts and gastronomy.

*Culture* is symbolic. In addition, the best example of this is language. The most important symbolic aspect of culture is language – using words to represent objects and ideas. Through language, humans are able to transmit culture from one generation to another. In particular, language makes it possible to learn from cumulative, shared experience. Without it, one could not inform others about events, emotions, and other experiences to which they were not a party. Language is both, part of culture as well as the medium by which culture defined and described.

## FURTHER READING

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