

Cross-cultural Communication

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Communication and Culture

Communication is cultural.

- It draws on speech patterns, language, and nonverbal messages.
- It is interactive.
- It operates through social relationships.

Cultural Fluency

- Essential for effective cross-cultural communication consists of
 - Understanding your own cultural lenses
 - Understanding communication
 - Variation across cultures
 - Applying these understandings to enhance relationships

(LeBaron, M. (July, 2006). Cross-cultural Communication.
(http://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/cross-cultural_communication/)

Meaning:

Cross-cultural communication is an interactive process of in which people from different cultures share meanings.

Communication Style

Bowling: A more relaxed sport involving prescribed turn taking. Asians are more comfortable in turn taking conversation.

Basketball: A fast-paced sport involving dribbling, guarding and snatching the ball. English speakers are familiar with conversation open to all.

Stainbach. S. (1996). *Conversational Styles around the Globe: Bowling, Basketball and Rugby. Fluent American English Video Series.* Davis, USA.

High-context Culture vs. Low-context Culture

High- context cultures prefer to use high-context messages in which most of the meaning is either implied by physical setting or presumed to be part of the individual internalized beliefs, values, norms, and social practices.

(Korean, Japanese, African-American, Mexican, and Latino)

Low-context cultures prefer to use low-context messages in which majority of the information is vested in the explicit code.

(German, Swedish, European American, and English)

Hall, E. T. (1976). *Beyond Culture*. New York, USA: Anchor & Doubleday.

High-context Culture vs. Low-context Culture

High-context cultures	Low-context cultures
Covert and implicit	Overt and explicit
Messages internalized	Messages plainly coded
Much non-verbal coding	Details verbalized
Reaction reserved	Reactions on the surface
Distinct ingroups and outgroups	Flexible ingroups and outgroups
Strong interpersonal bonds	Fragile interpersonal bonds
Commitment high	Commitment low
Time open and flexible	Time highly organized

Hall, E. T. (1976). *Beyond Culture*. New York, USA: Anchor & Doubleday.

Individualism vs. Collectivism

Definition: Culture differs in the extent to which individual autonomy is regarded favorably or unfavorably.

Individualism and collectivism: the degree to which a culture relies on and has allegiance to the self or the group.

	Individualism – Low Context	Collectivism – High Context
Countries	Austria, Belgium, the Netherlands, the United States, etc.	Korea, Indonesia, Pakistan, and West Africa
Key words	Independence, privacy, self, etc.	Harmony, cooperation, we, etc.
Example	Cheering with friends in sports Bar	Group cheering during 2002 World Cup (S. Korea)

Lustig, M. W. & Koester, J. (2010). *Intercultural Competence: Interpersonal Communication Across Cultures*, 6th ed., Boston, New York: Allyn & Bacon.

Common Cultural Difference

1. Perception of Time and Space
2. Fate and Personal Responsibility
3. Importance of Face



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Perception of Time and Space

Time

- **Monochromic** -- linear quantitative time, most common in Western culture.
- **Polychromic** -- cyclical time with unraveling and unlimited continuity, most common in Asian culture.

Space

- **Comfortable distance** between people
- Asians prefers to keep the wider distance than English speakers when they have conversation.

Fate and Personal Responsibility

1. Extent to which we feel ourselves to be the masters of our lives (English speakers)
2. Extent to which we see ourselves as subject to things outside our control (Asians influenced by Confucius ideas)

Importance of Face

1. Face is the standing a person has in the eyes of others.
2. The importance of “face” and face-saving varies across cultures
3. Asian cultures value “face” more than their own well-being (Confucius influence)
4. Western cultures care about face less than Korean counterpart.

Conflict Solution - Example

- Asian speakers prefer non-confrontational style.

(Preference is avoiding, obliging, Integrating, compromising, and dominating in order)

- English speakers concern for his or her own interests and pursue an outcome. Less concern about confrontational style

Cai, D. A., & E. L. Fink (2002).
Conflict Style Differences Between
Individualists and Collectivists.
Communication Monographs, 69,
67-87.

Cross-cultural communication in Practical Fields (Translating and Medical Field)

- **High possibility lost in translation when translators do not have cross cultural communication competency.**

ex) In India, slightly shaking a head means agreement but a translator from Western culture understands it is disagreement.

ex) Many African American in Southern California are accustomed to intimacy and informality in their personal relationships, while in Korean society, "direct eye contact is considered impolite.

(Herlinger, Chris. (1992) 'Culture Clash.' *Scholastic Update* 20 March

- **Cultural misunderstanding in the medical fields**

ex) In Korean culture, asking private and personal questions (sexual life, drug abuse, etc.) to minors in the absence of their parents is rare. Therefore, although that procedure is common in most American medial situations, it can cause the Korean parents' mistrust toward doctors although it is well intended to keep the minors privacy.

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