

CHAPTER 2

Culture and Communication

The Global Village

- Marshall McLuhan:
"Global village"

"Members of every nation are connected by communication technology."



Culture and Intercultural Communication

- Culture, defined:
 - 500 possibilities
 - Working definition:
"The language, values, beliefs, traditions, and customs people share and learn."
 - Bound by perception and definition.



Fundamental Concepts



- In-groups
- Out-groups
- Social identity
- Co-culture

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Intercultural Communication

- Intercultural communication, defined:

“The process that occurs when two or more cultures or co-cultures exchange messages in a manner that is influenced by their different cultural perceptions and symbol systems, both verbal and nonverbal (Samovar, et. al., 2007)”



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Degrees of Cultural Significance

- Encounters fit along a spectrum of “interculturalness”
- Least intercultural: Cultural differences mean little
- Most intercultural: Differences, backgrounds, beliefs noteworthy
- “Salience”: The weight we attach to a particular person or phenomenon.



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Interpersonal Communication and Intercultural Communication

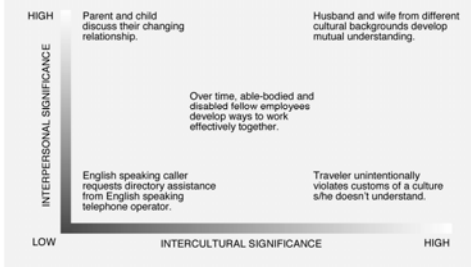
- Research:

“Forms a 2x2 matrix in which the importance of interpersonal communication forms one dimension and intercultural significance forms the second one.”



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Example of 2x2 Matrix



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Cultural Differences as Generalizations



- Cultural practices aren't totally different.
- Common ground
- Greater differences within cultures than between cultures.
- Generalizations don't always apply.

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High- Versus Low-Context

- Anthropologist Edward T. Hall:
 - Low-context culture
 - Language expresses thoughts, feelings, and ideas as directly as possible.
 - High-context culture
 - Relies heavily on subtle, often nonverbal cues to maintain social harmony
- How do these cultural norms impact communication?
- How do individuals in a low-context culture communicate differently from high context cultures?



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Individualism Versus Collectivism

- Individualistic:
 - Primary responsibility to help oneself.
- Collectivistic:
 - Loyalties and obligations to the in-group, extended, family, community, or work organization.



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Power Distance

- Power distance, defined:
 - Degree to which members of a society accept an unequal distribution of power.
- How is power distance identified in different cultures?
- How does power distance impact personal relationships in low- or high-context cultures?



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Uncertainty Avoidance



- Uncertainty avoidance, defined:
 - The degree to which member of a culture feel threatened by ambiguous situations and how much they try to avoid them.
- How is communication affected in culture with high uncertainty avoidance?

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Achievement Versus Nurturing

- Achievement culture:
 - Societies that place a high value on material success and focus on the task at hand
 - "Masculine" culture
- Nurturing culture
 - Cultures that regard the support of relationships as an especially important goal.
 - "Feminine" culture
- How do gender roles vary based on these cultural norms?



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Verbal Codes

- Language and identity
- How is language related to personal identity?
- What are examples of dominant and minority versions within the same language (for example the English language)?



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Verbal Communication Styles



- Three important differences:
 - Directness and indirectness
 - Elaborateness and succinctness
 - Formality and informality

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Nonverbal Codes

- People of all cultures convey messages through facial expression and gesture.
- What similarities or differences in facial expression interpretations exist between cultures? Gestures?
- What cultures have larger "personal space" zones?
- How do personal space variances create difficult communication situations?



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Decoding Messages



- Translation
 - Potential for misunderstanding is always present
- Attributional Variations
 - We form some sort of interpretation of what others' words and actions mean.
 - Ambiguous behavior is challenging.
- Patterns of thought
 - Affected by:
 - System of logic
 - Individualistic versus collective cultures

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Developing Intercultural Communication Competence



- Motivation and Attitude
 - Desire
- Tolerance for ambiguity
 - Living with uncertainty
- Open-mindedness
 - Beware of ethnocentrism
 - Beware of prejudice
 - Beware of stereotyping
- Knowledge and skill
 - Mindfulness
 - Passive observation
 - Active strategies
 - Use appropriate self-disclosure

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