Issues in Cross Cultural Communication

Learning Objectives

- Explain the basic communication process and define cross-cultural communication
- Understand how language affects communication and how different cultures use the four styles of verbal communication
- Discuss various types of nonverbal communication

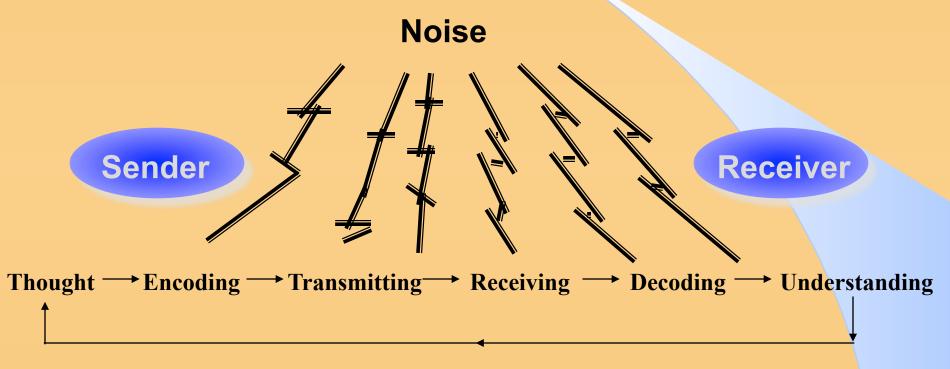
Learning Objectives (cont.)

- Enhance your cross-cultural communication skills
- Identify major barriers to communicating cross-culturally

Communication

The process of transmitting thoughts or ideas from one person to another

The Communication Process



Feedback

Fast and Slow Messages

- The speed at which a message can be decoded and acted on
- A headline is fast, a book or fine art is slow.
- A fast message sent to people who are geared to a slow format will usually miss the target.
- While the content of a wrong speed message may be understandable, it won't be received by someone expecting a different speed.

Examples of Fast and Slow

- Prose
- Headlines
- A communique
- Propaganda
- Cartoons
- TV Commercials
- Manners

- Poetry
- Books
- An ambassador
- Art
- TV Documentary
- Deep Relationships
- Culture

Space

- In humans territoriality is highly developed and strongly influenced by culture.
 - Americans tend to establish places that they label "mine."
- Space also communicates power, but differently in different cultures
- Personal space is another form of territoriality
- An invisible bubble of space which expands and contracts depending on relationship, emotional state, cultural background and activity performed.
 - E.g. Bubbles are larger in Northern Europe then Southern Europe so that there can be significant confusion.

Other Well Documented Cross-Cultural Communication Differences

- Language Usage
- Verbal Communication Styles
- Nonverbal Communication

Communication Styles

- High/low context
- Direct/indirect
- Elaborate/exact/succinct
- Instrumental/Affective
- Linear/circular/spatial
- Attached/detached

High and Low Context

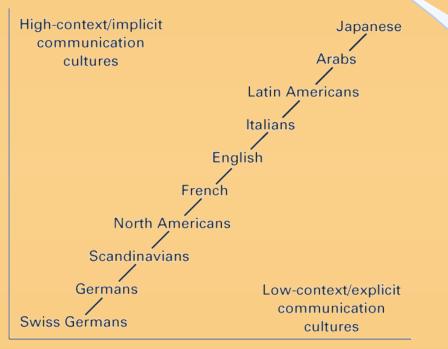


Figure 7-1

Explicit-Implicit Communication: An International Comparison

Source: Adapted from Martin Rosch, "Communications: Focal Point of Culture," Management International Review 27, no. 4 (1987), p. 60. Used with permission.

High Context and Low Context Communication

High-Context Low-Context

China Austria

Egypt Canada

France Denmark

Italy England

Japan Finland

Lebanon Germany

Saudi Arabia Norway

Spain Switzerland

Syria United States

Table 7–2 Verbal Styles Used in 10 Select Countries

Country	Indirect vs. Direct	Elaborate vs. Succinct	Contextual vs. Personal	Affective vs. Instrumental
Australia	Direct	Exacting	Personal	Instrumental
Canada	Direct	Exacting	Personal	Instrumental
Denmark	Direct	Exacting	Personal	Instrumental
Egypt	Indirect	Elaborate	Contextual	Affective
England	Direct	Exacting	Personal	Instrumental
Japan	Indirect	Succinct	Contextual	Affective
Korea	Indirect	Succinct	Contextual	Affective
Saudi Arabia	Indirect	Elaborate	Contextual	Affective
Sweden	Direct	Exacting	Personal	Instrumental
United States	Direct	Exacting	Personal	Instrumental

Source: Anne Marie Francesco and Barry Allen Gold, International Organizational Behavior: Text, Readings, Cases, and Skills, 1st Edition © 1998. Electronically reproduced by permission of Pearson Education, Inc., Upper Saddle River, New Jersey.

Direct/indirect styles

• The extent to which speakers reveal their intentions through explicit verbal communication.

Direct style

- Verbal messages reveal the speaker's true intentions, needs, wants, and desires.
 - Example: American demands for directness, such as "Get to the point" "What exactly are you trying to say?"

Elaborate/exact/succinct styles

• Refers to the quantity of talk that people value.

Exact Style

- Falls between elaborate and succinct, as expressed in the maxim, "verbal contributions should be no more or less information than is required"
 - Example: German advertisements tend to communicate all of the necessary facts with little or no embellishment

Instrumental/affective styles

 Refers to using language a tool for convincing or gaining an end versus language as a mechanism for description and feeling. Matches up with critical versus active listeners.

Instrumental Style

- Sender-oriented and goal-oriented
- Example: In the United States, the burden is on the sender to make the message clear. Assertiveness is valued, and persuasion is an important skill.

Linear/circular/spatial discussion styles

 The style of logical flow of a set of sentences/phrases.

Linear

- Thought patterns are linear and direct.
- Example: In English writing a typical paragraph consists of (1) a topic statement followed by (2) subdivisions of the topic statement, (3) examples to support each idea, and (4) examples of the relationships between ideas. Ideas are communicated as a bridge from point a to point b.

Linear Style Example

- First state your opinion:
 - "I believe in most cases it is most important for market research be fast, even if it means it is a bit less accurate."
- Then back it up in a linear logical way using an exact or succinct style.

A Linear-exact Example (continued)

"Let me explain. It takes about 9 months to get a new product> from prototype phase to the market. The market is changes quickly. Every year new introductions are necessary. Research has only 3 months to collect initial data and analyze what it means. This gives development, production, sales and delivery enough time to get the product on the shelves so that they do not fall behind the competition. Taking more time to get market research perfect means we miss the holiday shopping season. Most of your products have a life cycle of a few years. It is better to make continuous small corrections to the product over this time. Small adjustments in the product are easy to make, inexpensive, and take only a month to be on the shelf in stores. So it is much more dangerous and expensive to be late than to be slightly inaccurate."

Attached/detached argument styles

 Extent to which people become emotionally involved in arguments and topics of conversation.

Attached Style

- If it's important, it's worth getting worked up over.
- Example: Impassioned Russian argument
- Detached If it's important, it shouldn't be tainted by personal bias emotions.
- Example: Rational British argument

Use with caution

Too much of either

Major Characteristics of 4 Verbal Styles

Verbal Style	Variation	Major Characteristic	Cultures Where Found
Personal Vs. Contextual	Personal	Focus on speaker "personhood"	Low power distance, individualistic, low context
	Contextual	Focus of role of speaker, role relationships	High power distance, collective, high-context
Instrumental Vs. Affective	Instrumental	Language is goal oriented, sender focused	Individualistic, low-context
	Affective	Language is process oriented, receiver focused	Collective, high-context

Communications Exercise 1

- Organize into small groups
- For each culture in your group, compare two of the communication style categories across cultures
- Create a Category by Culture table
 - Include differences and similarities
 - What problems, misunderstandings might occur between these cultures in business situations do to the differences?

Forms of Nonverbal Communication

Kinesics Communication through body movements,

including facial expression, gestures, and posture

Oculesics Communication through eye contact and gaze

Haptics Communication through the use of body contact

Proxemics Communication through the use of space

Chronemics Communication through the use of time within a culture

Chromatics Communication through the use of colors

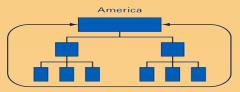
Communications Exercise 2

- Organize into small groups
- For each culture in your group, compare three of the non-verbal communication categories across cultures
 - how is it used
 - what does it mean?
- Create a Category by Culture table
- Include differences and similarities

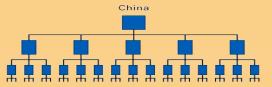
Communication Epigrams

There are a number of different "organization charts" that have been constructed to depict international organizations. An epigram is a poem or line of verse that is witty or satirical in nature. The following organization designs are epigrams that show how communication occurs in different countries. In examining them, remember that each contains considerable exaggeration and humor, but also some degree of truth.

In America, everyone thinks he or she has a communication pipeline directly to the top.



There are so many people in China that organizations are monolithic structures characterized by copious levels of bureaucracy. All information flows through channels.



At the United Nations everyone is arranged in a circle so that no one is more powerful than anyone else. Those directly in front or behind are philosophically aligned, and those nearby form part of an international bloc.



In France some people in the hierarchy are not linked to anyone, indicating how haphazard the structure can be.



Source: Adapted from Simcha Ronen, Comparative and Multinational Management (New York: Wiley, 1986), pp. 318—319. The epigrams in turn were derived from a variety of sources, including Robert M. Worchester of the U.K.-based Market and Opinion Research International (MORI), Ole Jacob Raad of Norway's PM Systems, and a medical plantages, 2000

Figure 7–2
Communication Epigrams

Suggestions for Communication

- Use most common words with most common meanings
- 2. Select words with few alternative meanings
- 3. Strictly follow rules of grammar
- 4. Speak with clear breaks between words
- 5. Avoid using esoteric or culturally biased words
- 6. Avoid use of slang
- 7. Don't use words or expressions requiring listener to form mental images
- 8. Mimic cultural flavor of non-native speaker's language
- 9. Paraphrase and repeat basic ideas continually
- 10. At end, test how well other understand by asking him/her to paraphrase

Barriers to Cross-Cultural Communication

- Culture
- Perception
- Experience

Convergence or Divergence?

- Increasing ease of communication
- Widespread use of English
- Similar words and concepts in different languages

- Number of different languages
- Barriers to crosscultural communication

Exercise 3

- Case Study: The Road to Hell
 - Individually, read the case study handout
 - Part 1: Break out into new groups
 - How did Rennalls experience the situation and why did he behave the way he did?
 - How did Baker experience the situation and why did he behave the way he did?
 - How would an outside observer explain why things happened the way that they did?

Exercise 3 continued

Part two

- How could this situation have been avoided in the first place?
- What, if anything should be done now? By whom?

Implications for Managers

- Cross-cultural communication a critical skill
- Awareness of differences can improve communication skill
- Important to learn other languages

Video Tape: Carlos

- Watch the video and identify the cultural dimensions/values that can be observed in the behavior of both Carlos and his boss.
 - Contrast the differences in their communication patterns using
 - the four verbal styles
 - polychronic/monochronic
 - high/low context

Carlos Exercise, continued

- What errors did Carlos make?
- What should he have done to be more effective in this cross-cultural incident?
- What errors did Carlos' boss make?
- What should the boss have done to be more effective?