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Cross-cultural Communication

What are the barriers to effective cross-cultural communication? How might these be surmounted?

As the enhancement and development of globalization, cross-cultural communication becomes more and more important. The key to the success of multinational business is the effective cross-cultural communication. However, it does have the barriers to effective cross-cultural communication. ✓

First, the different values can affect cross-cultural communication in some ways. Values are the comprehensive standard which people will use to distinguish what is right and wrong. Values are one of the most important problems in the cross-cultural communication because they are the main body which constitutes culture and society. In the cross-cultural communication, if organizations do not know their partner's values, it must have barriers in cross-cultural communication. In different countries and national culture, the difference of values compared with other differences is the most fundamental and it is hard to control as well. The real difference between different languages is the different ideas to this world, instead of the differences of sign or pronunciation. Realizing the effect of different values on the effective cross-cultural communication is the important thing we should do.

Second, the different levels of the language and non-language are also a big barrier in the cross-cultural communication. Different culture results in different language. If

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organizations speak language intangibly in business, receivers will spend large amounts of time understanding it. In this condition, it will have deviations. Then barriers will come out. At the same time, in the cross-cultural communication, people will use the way of non-language largely. Non-language includes gesture, eye contact, smile, countenance. Some researches indicate that when people express attitudes, language holds 7 percent of communication behavior and paralinguistics holds 38 percent of communication behavior. Non-language holds 55% in the communication behavior. However, some countries are high-context and some countries are low-context. In the high-context country such as Japan and China will appreciate the way of non-language. In the low-context country such as Western countries favor lean communication and express more directly.

For example, in Saudi Arabia, if a boy wants to express that he likes a girl with non-language way, he will platten his hair back. However, this behavior which express he is nervous is very common in the Asian country. In other words, one same non-language behavior expresses different meanings with different cultural backgrounds. Different understandings will result in misunderstanding.

Third, cultural taboo in different countries is one of the biggest barriers in cross-cultural communication. It makes cross-cultural communication more complicated. If organizations know nothing about local taboo in business, it will hurt other's feelings. For example, Thai will not touch others and others heads in public. If you touch Thai, especially Thai's head in public to express your amity, the first reaction of them will stay away you immediately. Some people even hate you. However, you will be confused and surprised. You have no intention in doing something and just want to express your amity. Then you will

receive disputes in turn. The reason is that Thai see the touch as taboo, but you will think it as the common way to express amilty.

Fourth, cultural stereotypes can also affect cross-cultural communication, especially in business. Sometimes, it is considered as the cultural stereotyped image. For example, we will consider French are romantic and German is law-abiding. In the cross-cultural communication, cultural stereotype will not consider personality. Cultural stereotypes are ineradicable. For example, people will think men are more powerful than women mostly. Cultural stereotypes will also affect the way of solving problems for organizations in business. People will make problems too simple or common. People tend to receive information which support their own ideas and exclude information which do not support their own ideas. Different people from different countries will forecast and evaluate others in their own cultural behavior and ideas. People from the same culture will have the same cultural standard and interest. However, once foreigner comes in, the insecurity and defenses will come out. So the barrier will come out as well.

Fifth, different ways of thinking and communication styles are also the barriers in the cross-cultural communication. It is a big business issue in cross-cultural communication. For example, Chinese will consider problems with the comprehensive ways. They will think principle firstly and details secondly. However, Americans will pay attention to the details directly. Cross-cultural communication is an interactive process. Different communication styles will bring big communication barriers.

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Although we have a lot of barriers in the cross-cultural communication, we still can surmount these barriers from some effective ways

First, people from different organizations should develop cross-cultural awareness. It includes that getting rid of cultural stereotype, prejudice. Then you can express and communicate your ideas about others belief, customs with people. This will make you learn more about different culture and be not confused.

Second, people need to learn to do as the Romans do. In general, we should respect and learn their culture and customs when you come into a new country. At the same time, If you only follow your own culture customs to do something, it will result in embarrassment, even violence. Besides that, for the business organizations, organizations can train their employees particularly. By the training, it can avoid organizations consider problems only by own cultural ways in business.

However, we should not follow the local customs totally. If the local customs contradict your values, what should I do? So the best way is learn to keep the differences between different cultural customs with the base of not respecting local culture.

Third, the most important ability organizations should learn in the cross-cultural communication is to try to feel partner's feelings and experience. In contrast, if you are not concerned about other's feeling, you will not have an effective cross-cultural communication. Because the communication is interactive, especially in business, everyone has own ideas and different cultural backgrounds. At the same time, when we have cross-cultural communication, we should also consider circumstances at that time.

Identify at least 2 theories of cross-cultural communication that can shed light on your own experiences of communicating across cultures. What do these theories explain? What do they fail to explain?

1st theory of cross-cultural communication (1)

The first theory of cross-cultural communication I want to talk about is the cultural diversity's impact on teams.

This theory explains two different aspects of the impacts. It suggests that cultural diversity can have positive and negative impacts on a team's productivity. The positive impacts reflect on the potential productivity that cultural diversity brings to. In contrast, cultural diversity can also bring complexity and is not easy to manage. The theory also explains advantages and disadvantages of cultural diversity in detail to make us understand well.

The first disadvantage is the attitudinal problems which are dislike and mistrust. To this idea, I agree it. The reason is that communication with people will not avoid these two problems, even the cross-cultural communication. Sometimes when you talk to foreign people, they will express themselves by their cultural ways, you will be not used to it. For example, when people from western countries meet and greet you, they will kiss cheek. This behavior is so exaggerated to me. The reason is that this greeting way is totally different from my culture. However, I will not very hate this way. But some people will very dislike the way which is totally different than their culture.

2. The second disadvantage is stereotyping. This happens in team commonly.

Everyone will use their personal and cultural ideas to think about problems and feel other's feelings. Sometimes, we will consider the black is not very nice, because their country is not very developed and rich. Then we will have some prejudice on them. However, with the globalization and growing cross-cultural communication, they have changes and are not same as before.

3. The third disadvantage is most common. That is communication problem which includes inaccuracy, misunderstanding and inefficiency. The most common situation I experience is that when I go to Starbucks to have hot coffees, they sometime can not understand it. Then I realize that my pronunciation of hot is different from them. So it is so easy that inaccuracy and misunderstanding in cross-cultural communication come out. Actually, inefficiency is also very common. Sometimes, professor will ask whether we have questions in the class, we are always silent and like to ask question after class, rather than in the class. This behavior sometimes will result in inefficiency in the cross-cultural communication.

4. The forth disadvantage is that when we have more groupthink, we will lack the ability to think by ourselves. That means we will overestimate the team's power. Sometimes, when different cultural ideas exist together, team will have difficulty in making decisions.

Besides that, the theory also talks about the advantages of cultural diversity's impact on teams.

The advantage it mentions is that it will have more and better ideas. It is obvious. I strongly agree it. At the same time, it is obvious in the team. Different cultural backgrounds will make team create more ideas and solve problems easily. For instance, we will be

classified with others to form a team to do our group project in every course. This is aimed to share our different ideas to achieve the same goal. Different ideas from different cultural backgrounds will make project more valuable.

Compared to disadvantages the theory mentions, advantages of cultural diversity's impact on team is much less than disadvantages. So I think this point make this theory scare. It not only brings creativity to the team, but also makes business team have boarder vision to solve different problems. In business, there are many problems which are unexpected. So teams are made up of different cultural background people will have much experience to solve it. What's more, teams with different cultural background can have precise division. A multinational company must have different business problems in different parts of the world, then diversity can have strong effect on them and can help them solve problems well.

In a word, the importance of cultural diversity's impact on teams is huge. In business, organization should make advantages of them and it will bring unexpected benefits in turn.

2nd theory related to cross-cultural communication (1)

The second theory related to cross-cultural communication I want to talk about is the cultural synergy. It focuses on managing the impacts of diversity, rather than eliminating them.

The theory also explains the steps to achieve cultural synergy. First, organizations need the cross-cultural situation description. Then it will need cross-cultural interpretation. Last, they will need the cultural creativity. In the first step, different cultural background

people will have different definitions to situation.

For example, when I face serious problems, I will be very nervous and do not know how to do. The first reaction to me is not to solve it, but to accept it. So I always find there are so many problems, because I have not solved it very well. However, western people have more courage and energy to overcome it when facing problems in serious situation. That means western people often view life as problems to be solved. They will not give up easily. In contrast, non-western people will accept a serious of situation.

In the step2, it mentions changing perspectives. I think it is very necessary. In the cross-cultural communication, if we do not change perspectives, many misunderstanding and discordance will come out. Then we will not get the use of cross-cultural communication, especially in the business. In the communication with foreign people, I usually express my own initial ideas to them and sometimes I will get unexpected answers. At the same time, compared to western people, Asian people will be more implicit and shy. So I am not very used to the way they express directly. Then I express this idea to them, rather not choosing to be silent. However, my western friends are not very surprised to this and express that they will adjust as soon as possible. So I think this communication will become more effective and interactive. You express yourselves and people will know what you think and how you feel.

Step3 mentions increasing cultural creativity. I also strongly agree it. Only finding cultural appropriate ways to solve different problems from multiple culture, will you achieve cultural synergy effectively. The reason is that cultural creativity can make people discuss together and make productivity. In the discussing process, cultural synergy will be formed and achieved.



However, I think the only left aspects the theory not mention is that although cultural synergy is necessary and important, keeping the personality is also important. When we have similarity and differentiation at the same time, the profits and productivity will grow double.

What are the implications of your insights for cross-cultural communication in international business organizations?

I think cross-cultural communication is very necessary and important to international business organization.

First, with the development of globalization, business becomes more and more international. Cross-cultural communication will bring business organization new creativity and innovation. Different ideas will make organization have more and better creativity on particular projects.

Second, cross-cultural communication will benefit the international business organization solve international problems easily. For example, if a business team has several different people from different countries, different people can be distributed specifically. That means one people can solve problems related to her/his cultural background. Similarly, other people can be assigned to solve another problems related to her/his cultural background. Then the business will be effective.

However, cross-cultural communication in business organization is not easy to manage and it will make business organizations less productive.

First, the language problems exist. Second, as the communication is cross-cultural,

it will reach an agreement sometimes. Business organizations need to satisfy different people's demand and requirement.

So what international business organizations need to do is that considering some ways to manage cross-cultural communication problems in advance.

As the international business organization, especially in the cross-cultural communication, they should set a specific goal. Then everyone in the organizations should make efforts to achieve it. That means they will have the same goal and values. With the same values, the conflict between cross-cultural communications in international business organization will be reduced.

With the basis of same goal, organizations also need to recognize and respect differences. It will make business be much strong and more stable.

At last, as the international business organization, it should have effective feedback to teams or employees if organizations want to get effective achievement in cross-cultural communication. The reason is that everything in communication and business is interactive. So organizations should give feedback to them so that cross-cultural communication in business organization can be more effective.

In a word, cross-cultural communication becomes more and more important and necessary to our current business. However, it is also not easy to manage. For the effective productivity and communication, how to manage cross-cultural communication in international business organization well is a big issue that current business organizations should consider strictly.

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