

## Essay

### How to break down barriers in intercultural communication?

Cross-cultural or intercultural communication is a part of the interaction of different people from different backgrounds and heritages. While communicating with representatives of another culture, we learn more impressive information about religion, traditions, family structure, and attitude to certain global problem etc. This knowledge helps us to become people with a broad outlook. Cultural learning is regarded as a crucial step in the process of developing a personality and moral foundation; intercultural awareness can serve as a valuable guide for comprehending a foreign environment and its cultural development as well as for establishing rapport with the people of other nationalities. The ability to find a common language is an essential feature in the modern world. The effectiveness of social interaction influences the quality of social relationship. However, there are several potential obstacles that could stand in the way of the communication processes, which prevents from being successful. To the astonishment of many, good intentions, the employment of what one thinks to be a friendly attitude and even the prospect of mutual advantages do not seem to be sufficient. What are the communication difficulties based on culture? How can these issues be solved?

In order to address the issue of connections between people from other cultures, it is necessary to comprehend the causes. The principles of the compulsory scale, which state that the greater the range of acceptable actions, the wider the field of communication between the representatives of different cultures. It should be highlighted that taboos, the main type of mandatory prohibition, have an impact on how intercultural communication is perceived. Based on the research of LaRay Barna, she identifies six stumbling blocks in intercultural communication, namely:

- Assumption of similarities
- Language differences
- Nonverbal misinterpretation
- Preconceptions and stereotypes
- Tendency to evaluate
- High anxiety

‘A worse scenario is when rejection occurs just because the group to which a person belongs is “different.” It’s appropriate at this time of major changes in the international scene to take a hard look at some of the reasons for this. New proximity and new types of relationships are presenting communication challenges that few people are ready to meet’ (LaRay Barna, 1994) Of all barriers in intercultural communications, in my opinion the most difficult to overcome are: language difference; stereotypes and preconceptions; high anxiety.

Language is an exchange gate of communication, it is the first step on the way to new acquaintances and knowledge. Ignorance of the language is the main obstacle to development as a multifaceted personality. For example, if you speak only English and a shopkeeper speaks only Japanese, you will not be able to communicate verbally. Even if you have studied the language, different accents and slang can cause problems. Furthermore, words don’t translate from one language in a clean one-to-one correspondence. The same word may have different meanings to people from different countries. The infinite variations possible, especially if inflection and tonal qualities are present, so difficult to cope with that they are

often waved aside. Also, do not forget about the power of metaphors, because sometimes, depending on the region of the world, their understanding may differ. To better understand other cultures, we need to know their world perception.

Added to that, body language is an important factor in communication. You can accomplish your communication objectives by using effective or even neutral body language cues. But incorrect signals, including clenching your fists, pointing your finger, giving someone a hard gaze or avoiding eye contact, invading someone's personal space, and crossing your arms, all send out the wrong signals. Eye contact, for instance, might be interpreted as unpleasant or confrontational in some parts of Asia and the Middle East yet conveys confidence in the West. Eye contact is also governed by gender, with many Eastern cultures forbidding women from making it with men since it suggests power. Additionally, contact is commonly employed in conversation, especially in professional settings, as seen by conventions like the handshake. Other cultures, however, frown upon touching others. Asia tends to be more conservative when it comes to contact, with bows frequently taking the place of handshakes. Patting someone on the head is an additional illustration of the variations in touching. The U.S. is admired for its affectionate interactions with children. However, it is considered disrespectful in several Asian cultures to touch the head of a child or an adult. Other ways that Americans differ from Europeans include not kissing each other on the cheek. Given that they can be a bit of a minefield, many businesses who conduct their operations overseas discipline themselves to limit their use of hand gestures. (PointPark, 2021).

However, the widespread practice of relying on clichés about people from different cultures is a much worse obstacle to intercultural communication. Stereotypes and prejudices about people from other cultures can cause big problems and give offense. Ethnocentrism, or the idea that your own culture is superior to others', might cause you to treat other groups with contempt and superiority. According to Jandt (2010), prejudice refers to irrational hatred – a gap that is created on the basis of hatred following a certain group, religion, cast or race. In this way, prejudice is inevitable blockage of cross-cultural communication as it is a source to augment victimization of certain groups. When victimization is there definitely lack of communication is there too (Jandt 83-85). This negative behaviour can cause a different sort of discrimination which can influence on a daily life of many ordinary people. As we can see even in our time, in many countries, the older generation continues to tell their descendants that the Germans are very bad people, because during the Second World War many terrible things were committed. The war is over, but stereotypes have not gone away. Another illustration is the perception that Arabs are "inflammable," which makes individuals of other nationalities stay away or even call the police when a loud and animated group from the Middle East gathers.

High anxiety or tension, also known as stresses, is common in cross-cultural experiences due to the number of uncertainties present. Because one cannot be physically tense without not being mentally uptight, the words "tension" and "anxiety" are related. When a person encounters his or her first cross-cultural engagement, anxiety frequently happens. It is even sometimes associated with the feeling of an unrealistic fear. When a person enters an unfamiliar environment for the first time, he/she feels overwhelmed and lonely. It seems that he/she is unable to communicate and begins to withdraw into himself/herself. This psychological state can lead to prolonged depression, because people cannot understand how

to proceed. Without new relationships, a person may inadvertently destroy old ones. People frequently experience a great deal of anxiety since they feel unsure of what to expect from their counterparts and have no idea how to interact with them. Whatever the reasons, everyone knows people who "fall apart at the least thing" and others who seem unflappable in any crisis. For example, my friend from England has experienced anxiety on her first day on a new college campus. She was so conscious of being new and out of place that she focused so much of her attention on the feeling that she made common mistakes and appeared awkward to others. After that incident, she could not find a common language with her classmates for a week.

The interactants' cultural differences in intercultural friendship pose challenges. According to the similarity-attraction effect, friends from the same culture tend to share the same race, ethnicity, age, sex, educational level, marital status, and social class. However, the similarity-attraction effect is more pronounced in individualistic cultures where the focus is on self-identity as opposed to collectivistic cultures where people are attracted to role rather than personal attributes. While some cultures are relatively similar due to shared histories and traditions (e.g., the United States and Canada), others differ markedly (e.g., the United States and China), making it more difficult for interactants to communicate and overcome barriers to friendship formation (Ling Chen, 2017).

It is important to emphasize that the foundation of successful cross-cultural communication is understanding and respect for the customs, quirks, and beliefs of other cultures. Obligatory behavior ignorance that cause offense and a poor view of the communication process are the causes of intercultural communication breakdown. The awareness and proper observance of these norms might result in the breakdown of transactions. Cultures typically have distinct rules aimed at re-establishing the broken relationship caused by violation of "must do" behavior. People across the globe and from many cultures socialize or interact in various ways, whether formally or informally (social relationship). For instance, the success of social ties between trading parties—who may be members of different cultures—is crucial to international trade. To avoid unpleasant situations with people from "different worlds", you need to be able to overcome barriers on your way. Even when there is an intercultural conflict, it does not mean that the connection is lost. Before giving up, you need to try to find a way out of the situation. Also, to avoid unwanted conversations, you need to be able to balance between different issues. After all, the future of your family, business, relationships depends on it.

Nowadays, at first glance, it may seem that in the era of globalization it is much easier to overcome barriers, because all people seem to be under one big dome, but this is not so, because the evolution of man and technology does not stand still. Many people narrow their circle of communication for many reasons: some do not have the desire, and some have lost contact due to the pandemic, war and crisis. There are also people who are opponents of globalization and who refuse to communicate with the outside world, they avoid any external influence and stay closed in their communes. But do not think that all is lost, because there is always a chance.

In my opinion, the first step towards overcoming intercultural barriers is to understand your attitude towards other cultures. Why do we treat this or that people this way? What influenced your opinion, is it not an old stereotype of society? In most cases, it is the obsessive thoughts of society that leave a trace that is very difficult to get rid of. However,

you cannot blindly trust every word, because your attitude and experience may differ. Most of the connections do not even appear, precisely because a person is afraid to take the first step towards the unknown. Then it is important not to forget that a properly built system of communication is also an important part of the right relationship. Therefore, before getting acquainted, learn more about the culture and rules of behavior of your future friend. The right introduction at the first meeting can then help in further communication. If communication has already started, do not forget that there should be a balance in your conversation. If you profess different religions, it does not mean that you have to prove the supremacy of yours. There is also no need to try to find something in common, because you are different and skin color, sexual orientation, religion, ect. should not affect the course of the conversation. Another important reason to overcome is anxiety. It is hard to deal with this feeling offensively when you have moved or live abroad. But there are many ways to break this barrier: you need to be confident in yourself and be convinced that you are safe. It may seem difficult to many, because how can you calm yourself down in a state of shock. In fact, it can be done easily, you just need to wake up from this terrible dream and understand that everything is in your hands. For some it may take a hour, and for others it may take a week, but do not be discouraged if it does not work right away.

In addition, do not forget that we live in the age of the latest technologies, social networks are an integral part of life. People upload tons of photos, posts, and videos every day. I believe that this is supposedly a passive way of overcoming the barrier in intercultural communications, because in this way information is exchanged between different people, the knowledge of various cultures spread over the world. The communication that occurs in these online contexts promotes interactive dialogues that build understanding of different points of view. In social media, people have the opportunity to express their opinions to the public and participate in conversations and dialogue through a common virtual medium (The impact of social media, 2012). Social media users' communication and behavioral patterns, for instance, show the disparities between individualistic and collectivistic cultures. Individualistic cultures place more value on meeting new people and being seen by many people than they do on sustaining current ties online. People from collectivistic societies, on the other hand, use social networking sites to keep in touch with intimate friends or family instead of forming new ones. Facebook is an illustration of a social media platform that encourages message-exchange between users worldwide. Mark Zuckerberg founded Facebook in 2004 with the goal of bringing individuals from various backgrounds together and fostering connection.

Social media and other factors can help international student to adapt to a new social environment. Despite the numerous benefits of intercultural friendships for both international and domestic students, however, international students often feel lonely and complain of a lack of host-national friends. Reasons can be found on both sides of the aisle: on part of sojourners and on part of hosts and host institutions. But the course of relationship can change as students find common interests through different apps and networks.

The most important thing to remember is that you always need to start with yourself, because self-improvement leads to the desired result. Social and formal connections between people from different cultural backgrounds are becoming more and more necessary as the world continues to become more globalized every day. Additionally, intercultural relationships—which depend on effective and easy intercultural communication—are crucial for international commerce connections and tourism. Since communication is a key

component of both social and economic elements of life in the modern world, the presence of obstacles and the resulting breakdown in those links will have negative impacts on those relationships. In order to avoid a conflict and make a good impression you have to learn different languages and be interested in art, architecture, ect. , because in this way you let your interlocutor understands that you are a highly erudite person. These barriers are significant and have to be removed to make cross-cultural communication effective. For this purpose, a solution for cross-cultural communicators is that individuals must attain a basic understanding of each others' cultures and thoughts. By doing this, the impact of the impeding hurdles that arise during cross-cultural engagement will be lessened. Culture is like an iceberg: what you can see is behavior, and that is impacted by values that are hidden beneath the surface. Conflicts across cultures arise when our own values are compromised by the actions of others. When you don't understand or agree with a behavior, it often indicates that there are competing ideals at play.

For most people breaking of intercultural barriers takes insight, training, and sometimes an alteration of longstanding habits or thinking patterns before progress can be made. The increasing need for global understanding, however, gives all of us the responsibility for giving it our best effort, can study other languages and learn to expect differences in nonverbal forms and other cultural aspects. You can train yourself to meet intercultural encounters with more attention to situational details. You can use an investigative approach rather than stereotypes and preconceptions. You can gradually expose yourself to differences so that they become less threatening. You can even learn to lower your tension level when needed to avoid triggering defensive reactions.

The only approach to resolve problems with cross-cultural communication is to promote the values of comprehension, openness, and acceptance of diversity. When attempting to close communication gaps, keep in mind that this is the beginning point. You need to understand that there are a lot of people like you in the world who also want to meet someone, but cannot do so because of their prejudices and doubts. Fighting with yourself is very exhausting, but in the end it leads to what you want. When you leave your comfort zone, you begin to gain invaluable experience that changes your life. Personally, my lifestyle transformed precisely when I moved abroad, because when I got into a new environment, I saw that it is possible to live differently. There are many factors that influence everything from language to traditions. Without collaborative efforts, the hosts and the new arrivals may end up with great frustrations, miscommunications, and identity misalignments. For communication to be effective and interesting, both sides should take the initiative, because dialogue is not a unilateral action, it should involve all participants. If you want to make even bigger development in intercultural commutation, do not forget that each of us have our motivations. One prefers to discover something new about other cultures and nationalities only because of interest but second want to use their knowledge to improve their business.

Although the basic building blocks of intercultural friendship have been outlined, much still waits to be explored. The task is arguably one of the most important in the world today. If friendship can ensure optimal intergroup contact and reduce prejudice, it ranks among the most urgent and meaningful topics to elucidate. There are as many opinions on the planet as there are people. We are all different, so we have no right to condemn someone just because of views and beliefs that contradict ours. It is necessary to treat everyone with respect, because we have the same right to self-expression. Friendship appears to be a

universal element of human cultures. It is necessary to try to find your own way despite fear, old stereotypes, because others do not have permission to influence your thoughts and goals. Your social circle should be formed only on your experience. Barriers are overcome better when there is a plan of action and a desire to act. In business, cross-cultural communication is essential to conducting effective transactions with groups and stakeholders located around the world. Everyone gains from expanded bandwidth, institutional knowledge, and competitive advantage when communication is effective. Ineffective communication, however, can offend, confuse, or send a misconstrued message which could lead to broken relations with customers, partners, vendors, and employees. It is never too late to start over, all conflicts can be resolved. This is irreplaceable knowledge that a person can gain only through his own mistakes and defeats. The main thing to remember is that every defeat makes you stronger. You need to think positively and be convinced that everything can be changed only through action.

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