

Communication Between Cultures

7th ed.

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Chapter 6 Overview

Language and culture: the essential partnership

- **Challenges of language**
- **Functions of language**
- **Language and culture**
- **Language as reflection of cultural values**
- **Language in intercultural communication**

Examples of the challenges of language in contemporary society

- **California's driving test administered in 32 languages**
- **Due to increased immigration, U.S. hospitals employ videoconferencing systems to connect with translators**
- **Large numbers of Korean mothers and children leaving father at home and learning English elsewhere**
- **Large numbers of people currently studying Mandarin Chinese in response to China's international prominence**

Social and cultural functions of language

Communicative exchange

Without language, unable to speak, write, listen to others, think.

Language conveys emotion, relieves stress, invokes assistance

Language and identity

National and ethnic identities derived in part from language.

Response to need to unify diverse groups (e.g. adoption of Hebrew in Israel)

Reinforces identity among minority group (e.g. Ebonics for African Americans)

Groups organized around language.

Age, gender, socio-economic levels revealed in linguistic conventions

Language and unity

Enables cooperative efforts on small and large scales.

Maintenance of social relations, creation/preservation of communal history, enculturation of group's values and norms

Language and culture

Language defined

Set of shared symbols/signs that a cooperative group of people have mutually agreed to use for creating meaning

Symbols and meanings often arbitrary, varying from culture to culture and within a single group (regional articles, expressions).

Prominent differences within common language in pronunciation, spelling, terminology.

Language variations

Accents = variations in pronunciation, often result of geographic difference

Dialect = distinctions in vocabulary, grammar, punctuation

Argot = specialized vocabulary of specific co-culture or group; jargon

Slang = extreme informality, often regionally or co-culturally based

Branding = use of corporate name/symbol to ID a product or create image

Symbiosis of language and culture

Language and culture are inseparable

- *Language reflects what's important in a culture;
culture shapes language*

American English and Japanese: language as reflection of cultural values

High and Low context

High context of Japanese language result of history of people living in closed society.

Seclusion/close proximity required little language, more focus on nonverbal/context for mutual understanding -- in contrast to directness/explicitness of English language.

High and Low power distance

Low-power distance of Americans discourages formalities; workers considered equals.

Japanese high-power distance stresses status, includes suffix terms:

sensei = teacher/doctor/political figure

sama = senior in status

chan = girls, small children

oniisan, onesan = older brother, sister

san = respected

kun = junior in status/friend

Otoson, Okasan = father, mother

chonon = oldest son

Individualism and Collectivism

Japanese: value of relations evident in extensive vocabulary related to emotions; value of group relationships in use of “uchi” (home/family) to refer to place of employment.

American English replete with words/phrases promoting individual, e.g. self-reliance.

Language in intercultural communication: Interpersonal interactions

Consider these to reduce potential for miscommunication

Mindfulness

- *create new categories*
- *be receptive to new information*
- *realize others may not share your perspective*
- *be aware ... second language more physically, cognitively demanding*

Fast speech rate of native speaker can challenge

Vocabulary level can impede; avoid jargon, acronyms, metaphors, slang

Alert yourself to nonverbal responses, including cultural difference cues

Checking: include measures to ensure understanding

Language in intercultural communication: Interpretation and translation

Interpreter converts spoken or signed language

Consecutive translation (interpretation)

*most often used in business meetings or small, informal gatherings;
short communication, pauses to interpret*

Simultaneous translation (interpretation)

speaker does not pause, ongoing

Translator converts written text

Language variations demand comprehensive vocabulary for correctness

Language in intercultural communication: Intercultural marriage

- **Choice of language for couple**
- **Choice of language for children**

Communication and technology language: The Internet

- **English, followed by Chinese and Spanish, most common language**

Internet developed in U.S.

English the lingua franca of scientific, academic publishing

- **China now surpasses U.S. in number of users, suggesting Chinese will become more prevalent; India not far behind**

- **Potential problems of multiculturalism and computer mediated communication**

Context not apparent, threat to traditional cultural barriers

Directness can create interpersonal conflict

Second-language users may lose pace, be excluded

Language considerations in intercultural competence

Learning a second language helps us think about the world in different dimensions

Enriches understanding of other cultures

Increases awareness of cultural influences

Increases/improves communication

Provides insight into emotions and values of other cultures

Next ...

Chapter 7

Nonverbal Communication:

**The messages of action, space, time, and
silence**

