

Communication

between cultures

8TH EDITION

Chapter 8

Verbal Messages: Exchanging Ideas Through Language

Key Ideas

- Functions of language
- Language and meaning
- Language and culture
- Using language
- Interpreting and translating
- Communication technology and language
- Language and intercultural competence

Functions of language

- Social interaction
- Social cohesion
- Expressions of identity

Language and meaning

- Language is a set of symbols that a cultural group has agreed to use to create meaning.
- The symbols and their meanings are often arbitrary
- Language variations
 - Accent
 - Dialect
 - Argot
 - Slang

Language and meaning

- Conversational taboos
 - Cultural restrictions related to the discussion of certain topics or use of certain words
 - Generally related to topics of sex, the supernatural, excretion and death

Language and culture

- Synergy between language and culture
 - Language is dominant in shaping worldview and perception of reality
 - A culture's language vocabulary emphasizes what is important

Using Language

- Using Language – how language to influence perceptions
- Spanish
 - Male orientation in Mexican society evident in gendered nouns and pronouns
 - Separate verb conjugations help Mexicans express formality which is important in the culture

Using Language

- Northeast Asian cultures (e.g. China, Korea, Japan)
 - High context cultures
 - Employ language in an indirect manner to promote harmony
 - Politeness takes precedence over truth
 - Importance of formality and hierarchy
 - Opposite of western culture's view of communication as a way to increase self-esteem

Using Language

- Arabic
 - Language unites and defines greater Arab community
 - Language is a function of history
 - Language possesses emotional content
 - Indirectness is used to ensure smooth relations
 - Repetition and exaggeration is used to appeal to emotions
 - Focus on the present and uncertainty about the future

Using Language

- English
 - “I” is used frequently in conversation
 - Language is used to protect your own face rather than the faces of others
 - Communication is used to promote individuality
 - Americans prefer to be on a first name basis quickly with titles rarely used

Interpreting and translating

- Interpretation - changing *oral* or signed messages from one language into another
- Translation – changing *written* or signed messages from one language to another
- Translation requires an extensive awareness of cultural factors

Interpreting and translating

- Working with interpreters and translators
 - Language knowledge
 - Dialect knowledge
 - Specialized technology
 - Cultural knowledge

Communication technology and language

- The digital age has greatly enhanced the ability of people around the world to easily and quickly “connect” with others through a variety of media
- Interacting through the Internet requires the use of a common language
- English continues to be the most common language among Internet users
- Language can also play a role in the selection of which social media outlet a culture favors

Language and intercultural competence

- Improving intercultural interactions
 - Being mindful
 - Speech rate
 - Vocabulary
 - Attend to nonverbal behaviors
 - Checking
- Second language benefits
 - Communicate with people
 - Shows people you're interested in them
 - Provides insight into the emotions and values of a culture

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