

Communication

between cultures

8TH EDITION

Chapter 10

Cultural Influences on Communication Contexts: Responding to the Setting

Key Ideas

Culture and Context

- All human interaction is influenced to some degree by the cultural, social, and physical settings in which it occurs
- Shared communication rules help determine if interaction will go smoothly or not.
- Culture helps to determine the appropriate communicative behavior within a variety of social and physical contexts by prescribing certain rules

Underlying assumptions about context

- Communication is rule governed
- Context helps specify communication rules
- Communication rules are culturally diverse

Assessing the context

- Formality and informality
- Assertiveness and interpersonal harmony -
Interpersonal problems can arise when someone from a culture that values assertiveness interacts with a person from a culture that values social harmony.
- Power distance relationships
 - Egalitarian
 - Hierarchical

Intercultural communication in the business context

- International business setting
 - Learn how to conduct business in a manner that accommodates different cultural rules
 - Knowledge of cultural differences, cross-cultural teamwork, and multicultural collaboration are essential for an organization's success

Intercultural communication in the business context

- Domestic business setting
 - Minorities (birth and immigrant) fastest-growing segment of U.S. demography
 - Businesses must adapt operations to appeal to different ethnicities
 - Successful management demands awareness, acceptance of varying cultural values

Communication in the multicultural business context

- Business protocols
 - Initial contact:
 - Direct: face-to-face, cold call, letter of intro
 - Use of emissary
 - Greeting behavior
 - informality v. formality
 - Verbal and/or nonverbal

Communication in the multicultural business context

- Personal appearance what constitutes appropriate dress (casual v. professional)
- Gift-giving distinction from bribes; to whom, what, when, and how to gift
- Conversational taboos - politics, personal information, jokes

Communication in the Multicultural business context

- Business cultures: Key principles
 - Culture influences organizational style
 - Culture influences leadership style
 - Culture influences decision making
 - Culture influences degree of formality
 - Culture influences impact of in-group/out group orientations
 - Culture influences methods managers use to motivate employees

Communication in the Multicultural business context

- Negotiation and conflict resolution
 - Brazil
 - Particular over universal
 - Relationship over task
 - Polychromic over monochromic
 - Group over individual
 - Flexible over inflexible

Communication in the Multicultural business context

- China
 - Status of team members is significant
 - Direct and indirect use of language, can also be a source of difficulties in international business
 - China is a group-oriented society and negotiations must cover the interests of many different parties
 - A contract is not a rigid agreement to which the parties are expected to adhere precisely to the various provisions but establish the parameters of the relationship, and the contract should serve only as an outline or guide

Communication in the Multicultural business context

- India
 - Necessary to establish personal relationships with those with whom you will be negotiating
 - Negotiations must follow formal procedures although the atmosphere may be friendly and relaxed
 - Negotiation plan proceeds in a series of steps that may take place over a period of days or weeks
 - Business organizations are high-context and even higher in the power distance dimension

Communication in the Multicultural business context

- Developing intercultural negotiation skills
 - Be prepared
 - Develop sensitivity as to the use of time
 - Listen carefully
 - Learn to tolerate ambiguity
 - Try to locate areas of agreement

The education context

- What is taught in a culture is crucial to the maintenance and perpetuation of that culture
- Cultures with formal educational systems tend to teach many of the same things such as literacy, mathematics, science, history, religion
- History is taught in all cultures but each culture emphasizes its own past

The education context

- Knowing how teaching occurs within a culture is important because it
 - Provides knowledge about the nature of the culture
 - Provides understanding about interpersonal relationships among students and between students and teachers
 - Illustrates the importance a culture places on education

Multicultural education

- Challenges of multicultural education
 - Goal is to prepare students to function as productive members of society
 - Majority and minority cultures play themselves out in visible ways in classrooms
 - Teachers need to find ways to build bridges between student's diverse home and educational experiences
 - A multicultural student body is important to the experiences of members of both the dominant culture and of co-cultures

Culture and education

- Culturally influenced learning preferences
- No agreement on the number or range of learning styles that exist
- The *ways of knowing* (the process people use to think about and become aware of their universe) is influenced by culture

Culture and education

- Cognitive learning styles are influenced by culture
 - Cultural learning preferences (how people receive and process information)
 - Field Independence Vs. Field Dependence
 - Field independent learners perceive objects as separate and individualized, that is, separate from the field
 - Field dependent learners tend to perceive information through a global perspective taking in the totality rather than individual aspects

Culture and education

- Cognitive learning styles are influenced by culture
 - Cooperation vs. Competition
 - Trial and Error vs. *Watch and do*
 - Tolerance vs. Intolerance for Ambiguity

Linguistic issues in multicultural education

- Linguistic diversity
 - Culturally and linguistically diverse students make up as much as 45 percent of the public school enrollment and that number is expected to grow
 - The educational system must recognize and accommodate to the needs of these culturally and linguistically diverse learners and provide not only academic instruction but English language learning (ELL) as well

Linguistic issues in multicultural education

- Linguistic diversity
 - No common language in US classrooms
 - Dialects and languages spoken by students influence teachers' perceptions of students'
 - Academic ability
 - Learning opportunities
 - Evaluations of their contributions to class
 - The way they are grouped for instruction
 - Formation of in-groups

Culturally and linguistically diverse students

- Culturally and linguistically diverse students may have a hard time due to cognitive and linguistic issues
- Academic insufficiency
- Enrollment at various points in their educational career
- Arrive from countries that emphasize different curricular sequences

Culturally responsive classroom communication

- Communicator characteristics
 - Self-efficacy
 - Immediacy
 - Empathy
 - Communicative supportive climate
 - Attend to verbal communication and nonverbal behavior
 - Accurately reflect and clarify feelings
 - Be genuine and congruent

Culturally responsive classroom communication

- Communicator strategies
 - Provide ample opportunities to discuss global topics of interest and relevance with students (Always encourage perspective)
 - Avoid conversations that perpetuate “us” and “them” discussions (foster a collective sense)
 - Allow discussion about unique cultural beliefs and practices and how they differ from those who misuse them to sustain terrorist activity
 - Be sensitive to cultural customs that might differ from the mainstream

Culturally responsive classroom communication

- Communicator strategies
 - Remind students that school is a safe place of learning for students of *all* cultural backgrounds
 - Use culturally relevant proverbs as a teaching tool
 - Teachers should ask questions of themselves regarding thing that would make students feel uncomfortable
 - Make good connections with students personally and intellectually

The healthcare context

- Language differences and ignorance of other cultures can lead to misunderstanding and adversely affect communication
- Different cultures frequently hold quite dissimilar beliefs about illness, health care, and death
- Physicians need skills in intercultural communication in order to receive and provide satisfactory health care

Diverse health care belief systems

- Supernatural/Mágico/Religious tradition
 - Underlying premises
 - Fate depends on the actions of God
 - Sorcery, magic, and evil spirits can negatively affect daily lives
 - Causes of illness – attributed to spiritual factors
 - Treatment of illness - positive association between the patient and the relevant spirits, deities

Diverse health care belief systems

- Holistic tradition
 - Underlying premises
 - The whole person, including all of his or her parts, is in constant interaction with everything in the surrounding environment
 - If someone suppresses anger over a long period, he or she often develops a serious illness
 - It is concerned with the connection of mind, body, and spirit and how persons interact with their environment
 - people accept responsibility for their own level of well-being, and everyday choices are used to take charge of one's own health

Diverse health care belief systems

- Holistic tradition
 - Causes of illness
 - For people to be healthy they must remain in harmony with nature's laws and willingly adjust and adapt to changes in their environment
 - people must adjust to the physical world rather than controlling or changing the environment
 - Treatment of illness
 - Traditional holistic folk-healing approach
 - Complementary Alternative Medicine (CAM)

Diverse health care belief systems

- Scientific biomedical tradition
 - Underlying premises
 - Poor health is a physical phenomenon that can be explained, identified, and treated with physical means
 - Focuses on the objective diagnosis and scientific explanation of disease
 - Does not take into account the person's psychological conditions, individual and social beliefs, attitudes and norms, or other factors that can affect health and illness

Diverse health care belief systems

- Scientific biomedical tradition
 - Causes of illness
 - When a person's condition is seen to deviate from clearly established norms based on biomedical science
 - Result of an invasion of bacteria or viruses, deterioration of skeletal structures or organs, abnormal cell growth, arteriolar deposits (etc.)
 - Treatment of illness
 - Destroy or remove the illness-causing agent
 - Treatments include surgery, medications, or other therapeutic interventions

Language diversity and healthcare communication

- Language diversity
 - Physicians may fail to understand information given by the immigrant patient
 - Language barriers impede diagnosis and treatment
- Employing Interpreters
 - Need of interpreters
 - Legal reasons
 - Quality-of-care reasons
 - Financial reasons

Language diversity and healthcare communication

- Employing Interpreters
 - Selecting and using interpreters
 - Can decode the words and provide the meaning behind the message
 - Trained in the health care field.
 - Give the interpreter time alone with the client.
 - Provide time for translation and interpretation.
 - Use same-gender interpreters whenever possible.

Language diversity and healthcare communication

- Employing Interpreters
 - Selecting and using interpreters
 - During the assessment direct your questions to the patient, not interpreter.
 - Ask one question at a time and allow interpretation and a response before asking another question.
 - Clients can usually understand more than they can express and need time to think in their own language
 - Review responses with the patient and interpreter at the end of a session

Effective intercultural health care communication

- Effective multicultural health care communication
 - Know Your Own Culture
 - Learn About Diverse Health Care Beliefs
- Developing effective health care communication strategies
 - Avoid stereotypes and generalizations
 - Conduct interviews
 - Discussing end of life situations.

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