

# The Relationship between Communication and Culture: Role of Culture in Verbal and Non-Verbal Communication

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**Abstract:** Globalization is altering the way of conducting any business and we need to understand that how to communicate effectively with others from a different culture. Cultures derive from communication. Culture is created by our mode of speaking and interacting with each other at our workplace or in any relationship whether in society, family or any organizations. Communication practices are always shaped by the cultural characteristics. Therefore, the two go hand in hand working together. Culture has a strong influence on communication and it is affected by the language and the way we communicate verbally or non-verbally. This means that culture has an impact on many different aspects of our lives. This exchange of idea, information and opinions can take place through different way and is impacted closely by culture. Equally culture and communication are influenced by the way we handle any situation or diversity in life. It is important to learn the relationship between culture and communication in order to do good business. To get the solutions for establishing any communication with other cultures there is a need to identify the root cause and possible outcomes of that communication keeping into consideration various cultural diversity. It is also required to understand non-verbal and verbal for good communication to happen. Minor things regarding communication i.e. not maintaining the eye contact or showing thumb can destroy a business arrangement because it may not be adequate in all cultures. This paper will discuss the culture and communication and the effects it has on organizations. The effect of communication in conducting any business in different cultures will also be discussed broadly.

**Keywords:** Communication, Culture, Non-verbal cues, Interpersonal communication.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The word culture has many different meanings. For artist it is an appreciation of good literature, music, art etc. For a biologist,

it is interaction of bacteria or other microorganisms growing in a nutrient or for students it is used for getting knowledge. The term 'Culture' was first used by the English Anthropologist Edward B. Tylor in his book, *Primitive Culture*, published in 1871. He explained culture as a very complex thing because it is a combination of knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, custom, and habits of an individual being a part of society. In fact, it is not limited to an individual. Tylor has made the concept of culture the central focus of anthropology [1]. Culture is a powerful human tool for survival, but it is a delicate experience as it changes constantly and easily lost because of its flexibility as it remains only in our minds. Our oral and written communication, monuments, buildings, and other man-made things are merely the products of culture. They are not culture in themselves. For this reason, archaeologists can not expose culture directly in their revealing. The smashed pots and other antiquity that they uncover are only remained material that reflects their cultural patterns - they are things that were made and used through cultural knowledge and skills. In other words, Culture is the uniqueness of a particular group of people, defined by everything from language, religion, food, social habits, harmony and arts [2]. Cultures are what make countries distinctive. Each country has different cultural behavior and cultural rituals. Culture is far more than just used and produced material goods. Culture is related to beliefs and values of the people of that particular culture. Culture also includes the approach in which people think and understand the world and their own life. Culture can also differ within a province, society or sub set. A place of work may have a specific culture that sets it apart from similar workplaces [3]. A section of a country may have a different culture than the rest of the country. For example: India's South East part has a different culture than the rest of country, which is expressed by different ways of talking, different types of music, and different types of dances. People may have a specific set of values because of their religion or their findings of new culture.

The study analyses the influences of culture upon the verbal and the non-verbal communication. A special attention has been given to the cultural factors which influence the organisational

communication: perception, ethnocentrism and stereotypes. The study analyses that communication not only inspires but is the foundation for culture. Communication and culture have a great influence on each other. The culture in which an individual is socialized has a great impact on communication.

*“Culture is the pattern of taken-for-granted assumptions about how a given collection of people should think, act, and feel as they go about their daily affairs” [4].*

From the above definition, it can be implied that culture gives people a specific way of deciphering things of outside world. If two people from different cultural backgrounds are communicating, they both may interpret the meaning of word differently, even if the conversation is in the same language because the same words can have different meanings in their respective cultures. Eg: Individuals from one culture may express their feelings in loud manner such as crying, anger, frustration, yelling etc. While another person from a different culture may keep their feelings hidden.

In times of rapid growth, both in terms of economic development and globalization, an increasing number of firms extend their businesses abroad. The findings of this study indicate that the barriers of communication come from the national culture’s influence on the workplace and behaviors of people with different identity. Moreover, culture also influences people’s way of thinking and behaving and result in different understandings toward vision and purposes of firms.

The relationship between communication and culture is a very complex and intimate one. It is observed that cultures are shaped by communication because through communication all the cultural distinctiveness whether be ethnicity or rituals can be created and shared [5]. Cultures are a natural consequence of social interaction. It cannot be created by human interaction in any association, groups, organizations, or societies. Apparently, cultures are the reflections of social communication. Culture is a natural phenomenon which can be shared through communication or interaction only. In fact culture is formed, shaped, transmitted, and learned through communication only as well as communication practices are mostly formed, shaped, and transmitted by culture. So both culture and communication go hand in hand.

Culture is a combination of diversified knowledge, tradition, language, rules, rituals, practices, lifestyles, attitudes, and thinking that connect entire world and give a universal identity to any region [6].

All social units and interpersonal relationships develop a culture. Almost in every relationship culture is reflected. In any organization relationship of leader and his/her team members can be taken as example. In spite of having different background they develop their own experiences to get the task done for any organization. In spite of having different language patterns and customs they strengthen their relationships and make it unique in the organization, that’s how they create their unique culture [7].

In order to give an identity to a social set we need to develop culture by collecting diversified rules, rituals, customs, and

other traditions. Group meetings, topics of their discussion, their decisions and their socialization show that how they differentiate each other and how they build special or unique culture.

Technology and media also play a crucial role to facilitate communication; they contribute to the creation, spread, development and progression of culture. In the development of any culture communication media also play a vital role in order to strengthen culture-building activities. By using such communication technology, messages can be broadcasted for building cultures. Through communication media makers can elaborate culture through broadcasting all the unique aspect of any specific culture and it can also be shared globally through social media platforms. So it this way to reflect, share and elaborate culture, communication media such as Television programs, websites, social media platforms are very essential role players.

## II. CULTURAL INFLUENCE ON LANGUAGE WORDS

Language is the carrier of culture and vocabulary and words are the basic component of language. It is a fact that cultural difference will definitely exhibited on the vocabulary, and the elucidation of expressions will also reflect the national or cultural difference. We can take an example of colour. White denotes and associates with pure, noble and moral goodness and the bride is also dressed in white colour during the wedding in most western countries. But in China the bride must wear red in the traditional wedding because Red denotes happiness, good luck, flourishing and prosperous in future and people only wear white in funerals on the demise of one’s family member or relative. White in China is associated with pale, weak and without vitality. That’s why, knowledge of a language implies not only the awareness of its grammar rules and the denotative meanings of words but it involves much more, such as the culture phenomena, the way of life, behavior and traditions, history and everything that is enclosed in culture. In a word, culture is a comprehensive combination of plentiful implication, and each factor in it may be exhibited on words. Learning vocabulary and language words with due attention to cultural factors, is crucial and essential [8].

## III. CULTURAL INFLUENCE ON LISTENING

In spite of spending lots of time in learning and practicing the ability of listening and comprehending any foreign language particularly in training learners often complain that they are not able to understand and their progress is not satisfactory. To achieve their objective to understand any language, they do everything what they can. For example, some buy tape recorders to facilitate their learning process in an attempt to improve their listening ability, and spend several hours in it every day. But when they meet new listening materials any recording, they still can’t comprehend them. There may be a variety of reasons behind it and some of them have been identified. Lack

of vocabulary, weak grammar, and vague pronunciation are some of them. But comparatively more important reason is that they lack the essential cultural background comprehension of the language they have learned. Listening is closely related to the culture, politics and economy of the target language for the learner. In evaluating one's listening ability, we consider his comprehensive ability, including the level of English, intellectual range, critical and imaginative ability, etc. It is common experience that whenever we listen to something if that event is familiar to us, no matter what they are, e.g. news, reports, stories, lectures; or art, science, sports or economy, it becomes comparatively easier for us to understand [9]. In spite of the presence of some new words in it, we become able to guess the meaning in the light of the context. On the contrary, it becomes difficult for us to understand, if the materials we are listening to are closely related to the cultural background knowledge we are not familiar with. Sometimes the materials may be uncomplicated and we can get the pronunciation of each word from the tape, but the lack of required cultural background knowledge may hamper our systematic understanding. If, for example, a student comes across a sentence like: Kaneel went downhill since Chappaquiddick. He won't find it difficult to understand the structure of the sentence. But if he is not aware that "Chappaquiddick" is the name of a place in America, and is used in this sentence to refer to the traffic accident Kaneel met, they cannot comprehend the real meaning. From the above explanation we can observe the importance of the vital role that culture plays in our listening ability: Culture is one of its no avoidable attachments [10]. It can hamper our progress of listening, and it can also facilitate it. So we should observe the existence of culture and try to take benefit of it.

#### IV. CULTURAL INFLUENCE ON SPEAKING

Similar to listening, the speaking ability is also not only an affair concerned with pronunciation or intonation but it is far more than that. There is a requirement to read a lot to understand the cultural background knowledge of any target language; only through reading they can communicate successfully with the others. So in the training of oral English language communication, facilitator should highlight the practical use of the language, and try to use the materials which come from the day to day life. This can help people use proper sentences in proper context. Otherwise, in spite of having excellent training in the linguistic aspect of the language, he may commit mistakes or have misunderstanding or misinterpretation due to the lack of cultural background knowledge [11]. For understanding this, the experience of a young interpreter is as follow: There is a young interpreter whose pronunciation is consistent and natural. The first time he was appointed to accompany a foreign guest, he tried his best to show that he was passionate, kind, thoughtful, and proficient. He tried to be conscientious as possible by giving such kind of statements: "You come this way." "You sit here." "Don't go too fast." "Follow me." "Don't be late." But the next day, he was surprised to know that the foreigner didn't want to go with him, because the foreigner

thought that the young interpreter was not courteous. In the foreigner's perception, the interpreter is not helping him, but scolding him as scolding a child. There is no problem in the interpreter's English, but the lack of the cultural background knowledge makes him incompetent for this job.

The example and scenario is simple, yet it says something very significant. In the course of oral communication, speakers should pay much attention to the environment, i.e. what you are saying, to whom you are saying it, when and where you are saying it, etc. [12, 13].

#### V. CULTURAL INFLUENCE ON READING

The reading process is not simply the replication and reappearance of the language knowledge which the students already have, but it is a complicated process which involves decoding, recognizing, analyzing, judging, and interfering the material through the cognitive system. So, it is significant for us to catch the non-verbal cues, such as: the background information about humanism, history, geography, and the traditional local customs, etc. Linguistic knowledge can affect one's reading, but cultural factors plays a more important role in the reading process, most of the true and serious reading barriers are not only from the language knowledge itself, but also caused by the cultural differences between the target language and our mother tongue. Cultural differences exist in background information, words, sentences, and text structures, all of which are going to become prospective barriers in reading matters [14, 15]. Sometimes we observe that the students may be familiar with the meaning of each word in the text, but they are still not so clear about the meaning of the whole sentences or paragraphs. One of Churchill's speeches during the Second World War is a very emblematic example of this case. In his speech, he used his private secretary's words to express himself: "After dinner, when I was thinking on the croquet lawn with Mr. Churchill, he reverted to this theme, and I asked whether for him, the arch anti-Communist, this was not bowing down in the house of Rimmon. Mr. Churchill replied, 'Not at all. I have only one purpose, the destruction of Hitler, and any life is much simplified thereby. If Hitler invaded Hell, I would make at least a favourable reference to the devil in the House of Commons.'" In the above paragraph, Churchill quoted three religious allusions: the first one is "bow down in the house of Rimmon." which comes from the "Bible". That means, "Doing things against one's willingness"; the second one is "Hell"; and the third one is "the devil". If we are aware of the three allusions, we can't completely understand that Churchill compared Communist USSR to the "Hell" and the Soviet Communist to the "devil". In the use of the religious allusions in this paragraph, Mr. Churchill not only showed his anti-Communist stand, but also avoided annoying the Soviet Union Communist directly. So the real meaning of this paragraph is that his support to the USSR is for the salvation of the human beings, and it does not mean that he has changed his anti-Communist stand [16, 17]. So we can observe that the knowledge of language itself cannot unravel all the problems in reading. People's works

are always related with the culture of their nations, especially related allusions or usage, which we are not familiar with. That reminds us that we should pay attention to the cultural influence in reading. Cultural influence and reading also go hand in hand.

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