

Vasylyshyna N. M.,  
Kyiv National Aviation University Institute of Foreign Relations

## IMPACT OF SOCIAL-LINGUISTIC DIFFERENCES AND PSYCHOLOGICAL BARRIERS ON INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

*Стаття розкриває найважливіші аспекти міжкультурної комунікації. Особлива увага надається головним відмінностям, які перешкоджають успішній комунікації, а також зосереджується на трьох бар'єрах, які виникають у процесі комунікації.*

**Ключові слова:** культури, комунікація, взаємодія, технологія, прийняття рішень, обізнаність, розуміння, вміння вести переговори, звикнути, хвилювання, спільність, релятивізм.

*Данная статья раскрывает самые важные аспекты межкультурной коммуникации. В частности обращается особое внимание главным отличиям, которые препятствуют успешной коммуникации, и сосредотачивается на трёх барьерах возникающих в процессе взаимодействия.*

**Ключевые слова:** культуры, коммуникация, взаимодействие, технология, принятие решений, осведомленность, понимание, вести переговоры, привыкнуть, волнение, общность, релятивизм.

*The article deals with the most important and urgent aspects of intercultural communication. In particular it highlights main cultural differences which prevent from successful communication and focuses on three barriers that may occur in the interacting process.*

**Key words:** cultures, communication, interaction, technology, decision-making, awareness, preunderstanding, negotiate, accustom, anxiety, similarity, relativism.

In today's world, people spend a considerable amount of time communicating across cultures with other people and organizations around the world. Intercultural communication shapes the way people contend with change, deliver messages across borders and cultures, and revisit the fundamental properties of time and space. Effective functioning in an international business environment depends on the ability of employees to adapt to the complexity of other cultures. Employees need to learn how to effectively understand, accept, and respond to cultural differences.

The blend of cultural backgrounds and professional experiences has become a reality in the global business world. To work effectively with diverse people, managers need to know not only about the culture of the person with whom they are interacting, but also about his or her personality, behavior patterns in conflict situations, demographics, and life experiences. With the spread of communication technology and the decrease of time spent in face-to-face interaction, obtaining information from a business partner requires a high level of intercultural communication competence. This critical skill improves the decision-making and problem-solving abilities of those who manage in the global marketplace. [1, p. 34]

Effective communication with people of different cultures is especially challenging. Cultures provide people with ways of thinking—ways of seeing, hearing, and interpreting the world. Thus the same words can mean different things to people from different cultures, even when they talk the “same” language. When the languages are different, and translation has to be used to communicate, the potential for misunderstandings increases.

*The aim of the article* is to demonstrate cultural, linguistic, social diversities in communication process in order to define similarities knowing which will be useful in performing successful and efficient interacting activities. For doing this would be appropriate to mention and analyze point of view of some investigators in this field.

Stella Ting-Toomey describes three ways in which culture interferes with effective cross-cultural understanding. First is what she calls “cognitive constraints.” These are the frames of reference or world views that provide a backdrop that all new information is compared to or inserted into [3, p. 90].

Second are “behavior constraints.” Each culture has its own rules about proper behavior which affect verbal and nonverbal communication. Whether one looks the other person in the eye or not; whether one says what one means overtly or talks around the issue; how close the people stand to each other when they are talking— all of these and many more are rules of politeness which differ from culture to culture.

Ting-Toomey's third factor is “emotional constraints.” Different cultures regulate the display of emotion differently. Some cultures get very emotional when they are debating an issue. They yell, they cry, they exhibit their anger, fear, frustration, and other feelings openly. Other cultures try to keep their emotions hidden, exhibiting or sharing only the “rational” or factual aspects of the situation [2, p. 12].

All of these differences tend to lead to communication problems. If the people involved are not aware of the potential for such problems, they are even more likely to fall victim to them, although it takes more than awareness to overcome these problems and communicate effectively across cultures. Cohen argues that cross-cultural differences have significant effects on diplomatic negotiations. Failure to understand and appreciate these differences can have serious consequences for negotiations [4, p. 89]. “Diplomatic negotiation consists of a process of communication between states seeking to arrive at a mutually acceptable outcome on some issue of shared concern.” [1, p. 7].

Besides mentioned above diversities there are some barriers of intercultural communication. The article under consideration views three basic obstacles being aware of which prevents from making mistakes. Taking them into account can help to improve students' intercultural communication skills.

The first barrier is *high anxiety*. When you are anxious because of not knowing what you are expected to do, it is only natural to focus on that feeling and not be totally present in the communication transaction. For example, you may have experienced anxiety on your very first day on a new college campus or in a new job. You may be so conscious of being new – and out of place – and focus so much of your attention on that feeling that you make common mistakes

and appear awkward to others. Sugawara (1993) surveyed 168 Japanese employees of Japanese companies working in the United States and 135 of their U.S. coworkers. Only 8% of the U.S. coworkers felt impatient with the Japanese coworkers' English. While 19% of the Japanese employees felt their spoken English was poor or very poor and 20% reported feeling nervous when speaking English with U.S. coworkers, 30% of the Japanese employees felt the U.S. coworkers were impatient with their accent, and almost 60% believed that language was the problem in communicating with the U.S. coworkers. For some, anxiety over speaking English properly contributed to avoiding interactions with the U.S. coworkers and limiting interactions both on and off the job to other Japanese only [1, p. 65].

The second barrier is *assuming similarity instead of difference*. When you assume similarity between cultures you can be caught unaware of important differences. When you have no information about a new culture, it might make sense to assume there are no differences, to behave as you would in your home culture. But each culture is different and unique to some degree. Boucher (1974), for example, has shown how cultures differ as to whom it is appropriate to display emotions. If you assume that display of emotions is similar to your culture, you might see people in some circumstances as lacking emotion and others in other circumstances as displaying emotions inappropriately. The inverse can be a barrier as well. Assuming difference instead of similarity can lead to your not recognizing important things that cultures share in common. It's better to assume nothing. It's better to ask, "What are the customs?" rather than assuming they're the same—or different—everywhere.

The third barrier to effective intercultural communication is *ethnocentrism*, or negatively judging aspects of another culture by the standards of one's own culture. To be ethnocentric is to believe in the superiority of one's own culture. Everything in a culture is consistent to that culture and makes sense if you understand that culture. For example, assume that global warming is a fact and, as a result, assume that summers in the United States average 43° C (109° F). It would be logical to make adjustments: Rather than air condition buildings all day, you might close schools and businesses in the afternoons to conserve energy. Another name for ethnocentrism is the anthropological concept of *cultural relativism* [4, p. 67].

It does not mean that everything is equal. It does mean that we must try to understand other people's behavior in the context of their culture before we judge it. It also means that we recognize the arbitrary nature of our own cultural behaviors and be willing to reexamine them by learning about behaviors in other cultures (Cohen, 1998). A less extreme form of ethnocentrism can be labeled *cultural nearsightedness*, or taking one's own culture for granted and neglecting other cultures. For example, people in the United States often use the word *Americans* to refer to U.S. citizens, but actually that word is the correct designation of all people in North and South America. Its careless use is a form of ethnocentrism [1, p. 79].

To top it off, even though modern communication technology allows people access to increasing amounts of information about things happening all over the world, there is still a tendency for people to be more interested in local, state, and national news. In the United States, the most popular news shows do not cover international events in as much detail or accuracy as they do national and local news. It is common for people to form opinions about other countries using only the knowledge acquired through the media. Even though there may be many ties between countries, such as those between the United States and Japan, international travelers still often find that things are very different from what they had expected, which sometimes leads to feelings of anxiety.

But the most far-reaching goal of intercultural education is to give people the ability and skill to live in other cultures and to exercise other communication patterns. For this type of education, training in the language of the new culture is clearly of the greatest importance. Education in foreign language is education in intercultural communication. After all, we will be speaking the language we learn with people from another cultural background than our own. To serve as an effective instrument for the purpose of intercultural communication, language instruction must place greater importance on the way in which a language is tied to a cultural pattern. Beyond traditional written language instruction, much greater consideration must be given to the conditions for understanding, i.e. what sort of preunderstanding is normally required among large groups of people in a culture. Greater consideration should also be given to factors that are decisive in the spoken language, such as body communication, intonation, feedback and turn-taking. Language instruction that contains more of these components would have the possibility much more so than is the case today to be a support for the individual who gradually with the help of the learned language will begin some type of intercultural communication.

#### Literature:

1. Abe, H., & Wiseman, R. A cross-cultural confirmation of the dimensions of intercultural effectiveness // *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*. – Great Britain, 1983. – 56 p.
2. Barnard, G. (1995). *Cross-cultural communication: A practical guide*. – Trowbridge: Wiltshire, Great Britain: Redwood Books, 1995. – 405 p.
3. Bantz, C. R. Cultural diversity and group cross-cultural team research // *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 1993. – 32 p.
4. Barna, L. M. (1982). Stumbling blocks in interpersonal intercultural communications. In L. Samovar & R. Porter (Eds.), *Intercultural communication*. – Belmont, CA : Wadsworth, 1982. – 356 p.
5. Chen, G., & Starosta W. J. (Eds.), *Communication and global society*. – New York: Peter Long Publishing, 2006. – 342 p.