

## INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION PERFECTING – HARMONIZING FACTOR WITHIN GLOBALIZATION

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**Abstract:** *The economic globalization represents the free movement of the capital along with the increasing domination of the global financial markets and of multinational corporations upon the national economies. The globalization process determines an increasing mobility of the human capital, thus occurring an overlapping of different cultures within a certain space. The intercultural communication represents the relationships established between persons or groups belonging to different cultures. Each of us, either managers or employs has to know how to get along with persons coming from different cultures, how to deal with the problems resulting from this differentiation and, to know how to survive within a culture which is not identical to his own. In these situations, the manager's role is very important and especially determinant for the good management of the crises situations.*

**Keywords:** intercultural communication, organization, culture, globalization

### 1. Introduction

Globalization increases the integration and interdependence of international, national and local business and stakeholder communities across economic, political and cultural spheres.

In today's knowledge based economy, an increasing number of companies are much more aware of the importance of investing in human capital and its strategic role in companies' growth in the global economy. Employees are no longer regarded as unavoidable expenses but assets that can be leveraged to enhance the organization's capabilities and create competitive advantages in the marketplace.

In particular, investing in the communication skills of organizational staff at different levels can improve the organization's overall efficiency, lower the operation costs

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and more importantly, generate more business potential as well as more profits for the respective organization.

Senior management of multinational companies always needs to monitor performance of different units across the globe. In markets which grow rapidly, demand for educated staff is very high and company might not be able to hire technical people who also possess excellent language or communication skills.

Cultural differences between different regions also make it difficult for managers located at headquarter to get accurate information about the domestic business environments from some local managers.

Likewise, local managers have hard time reporting to headquarter the nuances of domestic situations. If local managers can develop better communication skills and overcome language and cultural barriers, management at headquarter will be able to understand the ever changing situations in local markets more precisely and rapidly.

As a result, they can make better judgement, capture more business opportunities around the globe and therefore gain more profit for the company. It also saves management's time on communicating with their team members and the costs involved.

## **2. Communication and globalization within society**

The new global economy of the twenty-first century has transformed the economic, social, educational and political landscape in a profound and indelible manner. It is composed of a trilogy of interactive forces that include globalization, trade liberalization and the information technology and communications revolution.

Globalization has melted national borders, free trade has enhanced economic integration and the information and communications revolution has made geography and time irrelevant.

The role and functions of entrepreneurship in the new global economy have taken on added significance and face compounded challenges. We live in a challenging environment of rapidly changing economic events, where the private sector has become the most important engine of economic growth and the public sector has shrunk in importance and influence.

Entrepreneurs are defining the new rules of engagement on the economic landscape as they come to grips with contemporary challenges and new opportunities. In this new environment, entrepreneurs need to articulate a pragmatic vision, exercise effective leadership and develop a competent business strategy.

They should create the synergies that will allow them to integrate the interactive ingredients of the new economy in order to enhance their competitive advantage. Their business strategy should embrace flexibility, a quick response time and a proactive approach to economic opportunities.

Today's organizations and companies are dealing more and more in a global scenario. People are no longer constrained by borders or distance and as a result, globalization has meant a fundamental change in who, where and why people do business. The people that do these organizations tick are increasingly based in remote locations in foreign countries or drawn from a rich mix of cultural backgrounds.

The need for effective and clear intercultural communication is becoming vital in assuring success in the today's globalized workplace.

There is a question that raises: what is intercultural communication? It has many definitions but fundamentally it looks at how people, from different cultural/natural backgrounds, endeavour to communicate or work together.

Intercultural communication in its most basic form refers to an academic field of study and research. It seeks to understand how people from different countries and cultures behave, communicate and perceive the world around them.

The findings of such academic research are then applied to 'real life' situations such as how to create cultural synergy between people from different cultures within an organization.

There are many researchers, who naturally all have different definitions of 'intercultural communication'. For example Karlfried Knapp defines "Intercultural communication, as being "the interpersonal interaction between members of different groups, which differ from each other in respect of the knowledge shared by their members and in respect of their linguistic forms of symbolic behaviour" [12].

There are also many definitions developed by other researchers, such as Edward T. Hall, Geert Hofstede, Harry C. Triandis, Fons Trompenaars, Clifford Geertz and Shalom Schwartz.

Another definition of intercultural communication is provided by O. Kovbasyuk (2) who affirms that "In its most general sense, international communication occurs when a member of one culture produces a message for consumption by a member of another culture.

More precisely, international communication is communication between people whose cultural perceptions and symbol systems are distinct enough to alter the communication event". In spite of the fact that this phenomenon is being

researched by scholars from the whole world for many years, it still remains timely and causes controversies and discussions.

The theories developed by the researchers have been applied to many fields such as business, management, marketing, advertising and website design. An organization becomes more and more international, many companies need to know how well to develop their structure, to manage their staff and communicate with customers.

Intercultural communication gives them an insight into the areas they need to address or understand. Intercultural communication theories are now also used within the education, health care and other public services due to growing multicultural populations.

Every organization has its own unique culture even though they may not have consciously tried to create it. Rather it will have been probably created unconsciously, based on the values of the top management or the founders or core people who build and/or direct that organization.

Over time individuals (particularly the organization's leaders) attempt to change the culture of their organizations to fit their own preferences or changing marketplace conditions.

This culture then influences the decision-making processes, it affects styles of management and what everyone determines as success. When an organization is created it becomes its own world and its culture becomes the foundation on which the organization will exist in the world.

People's actions in organizations are not always 'their own' but are largely influenced by the socialization processes of the specific culture to which they belong.

Interpreting and understanding organizational culture is an important activity for managers and consultants, because it affects the strategic development, productivity and learning at all levels. Cultural assumptions can both enable and constrain what organizations are able to do. The job of the consultant is to provide a method and a structure for organization so that the organization to be able to surface the most relevant cultural assumptions.

A key role for culture is to differentiate the organization from others and provide sense of identity for its members. Cultures do not have to be logical or consistent; in fact, they seldom are and can appear quite chaotic to the outsider. It can also have subgroups with different cultures and with varying agendas. A strong culture is one that is internally consistent, widely shared and makes it clear what it expects and how it wishes people to behave.

There are some intercultural communication principles that guide the process of exchanging meaningful and unambiguous information across cultural boundaries, in a way that preserves mutual respect and minimizes antagonism. For these purposes, culture is a shared system of symbols, beliefs, attitudes, values, expectations, and norms of behaviour. It refers to coherent groups of people whether resident wholly or partly within state territories, or existing without residence in any particular territory.

Two factors have raised the importance of this topic:

- improvements in communication and transportation technology have made it possible for previously stable cultures to meet in unstructured situations, e.g. the internet opens lines of communication without mediation, while budget airlines transplant ordinary citizens into unfamiliar *milieux*. Experience proves that merely crossing cultural boundaries can be considered threatening, while positive attempts to interact may provoke defensive responses. Misunderstanding may be compounded by either an exaggerated sensitivity to possible slights, or an exaggerated and over-protective fear of giving offence;

- some groups believe that the phenomenon of globalization has reduced cultural diversity and so reduced the opportunity for misunderstandings, but characterizing people as a homogeneous market is simplistic. One product or brand only appeals to the material aspirations of one self-selecting group of buyers, and its sales performance will not affect the vast multiplicity of factors that may separate the cultures.

Today's manager increasingly has to work in international and cross cultural environments. Within the context of the globalized organization, intercultural communication looks at how people communicate (verbally and non-verbally), manage, work together, approach deadlines, negotiate, meet, greet, build relations etc. Working in the globalized world economy is proving to have a positive effect on individuals and companies. As people are forced to think outside the box, they develop greater interpersonal skills, flex their creative muscle and learn new ways of doing things.

Communication is the basic concept in explaining globalization. Globalization can be observed as the worldwide expansion of a functionally differentiated society through international communication.

In this society, since the 17<sup>th</sup> century, intercultural communication has assumed the form of a modernist ethnocentrism based on values such as knowledge, pluralism and individualism.

During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, historical changes created the necessity for new forms of intercultural communication.

In the last decade of that century, a trans-cultural form of communication based on dialog was proposed as a basis for the cross-cultural adaptation, a creation of multicultural identities and a construction of a hybrid multicultural society.

However, this trans-cultural form creates paradoxes and difficulties in intercultural communication, mixing the preservation of cultural difference with the search for synthesis. Consequently, a new form of intercultural dialogue, dealing with incommensurable differences and managing conflicts is needed to create coordination among different cultural perspectives.

Intercultural communication between peoples is an integral attribute of the human society development. Not a single country, even the one considered most powerful in political and economical aspect, can meet cultural and aesthetic requests and needs of the humankind without applying to the world cultural heritage, spiritual heritage of other countries and peoples.

The modern world is developing towards globalization. In this regard, the issue about the role and place of international communication become an integral part of life both for the humankind in general, as well as for the individual.

Societies and implicitly organizations have no choice of either to participate in the process of globalization or not, but the character of their participation is shaped by specific social, cultural, economic and political conditions.

This complex multi-level process of mediation between the global and local issues, being an inherent character of communication, promises to change not only the context, but also the nature of intercultural communication. Thus, the question about the place of intercultural communication is ambiguous.

Managers working in multinational companies carry out their organizational goals through multicultural teams. Performance of multicultural teams can be examined from an intercultural communication perspective. Executives, managers, management consultants, and educators interested in improving multicultural team performance need to know about intercultural competence and how it affects team performance.

This article provides a working definition of high-performance multicultural teams and outlines the challenges multicultural teams face. It also aims to highlight the characteristics of high-performance multicultural teams, the common challenges of multicultural teams and the sources of these challenges.

Organizational approaches to international organizations have evolved from multinationalism to globalization, being necessary a more sophisticated and well-

trained management to cope with the complexities of the organization's involvement in multiple foreign markets. Managers from various cultures/ countries must be successfully melded together at each corporate location, including the corporate headquarters, to maximize overall benefits to the corporate network.

The need to develop the multicultural multinational organizations to compete in the global marketplace effectively is the logical next step in the evolution of the global organization.

As global competition intensifies, it is becoming necessary for organizations to establish strong intercultural relationships with a culturally diverse set of employees, interorganizational partners as well as customers. In order to manage these relationships effectively, organizations need a means to understand and improve global intercultural communications.

The complexity of intercultural communications requires management to understand the nature of domains of global relationships and the level of complexity when attempting to communicate with multiple partners having unique national and organizational cultures.

In addition to the normal pressures of man-management, managers are now required to deal with challenges, friction and misunderstandings emanating from cross cultural differences. Effective management in the modern environment necessitates cross cultural competency in order to get the best out of a multicultural team.

Intercultural communication is of importance to international organization as it examines how people from different cultures, beliefs and religions come together to work and communicate with each other.

Demands for intercultural communication skills are increasing as more and more organizations go global or international. They realize that there are barriers and limitations when entering a foreign territory. Without the help of intercultural communication they can unknowingly cause confusion and misunderstandings.

For these intercultural businesses to breach the cultural barriers encountered when stepping into foreign grounds it is vital for them to fully understand the cultural differences that exist so as to prevent damaging business relations due to intercultural communication gaps.

## **Conclusions**

Working in the globalized world economy is proving to have positive effects on individuals and organizations. The need for intercultural communication skill is obvious – everybody is working in an interconnected global economy and it is important to build good relationships with people from other cultures. This leads to better business and connections.

The goal of business managers is to maximize the potential revenue of the business and minimize its costs. The pursuit of a multicultural workforce should not be viewed as anything other than good business. It is a good business because it provides the organization with a valuable internal resource that can be leveraged to a competitive advantage. Effectively managing disputes minimizes costs. These techniques may level the playing field through fairness and accommodation of differing communication needs, thereby enriching the corporate lives of those affected.

The structural transformation of the new global economy has not been confined to economic parameters. It is equally pervasive in the way people live, learn, work, invest, provide the health care, and exercise the democratic responsibilities, influence the formulation of public policy and communicate with each other. The rapidity of change and the magnitude of structural transformation are hallmarks of this economic structural transformation – a pace of change that is unprecedented in the history of mankind (Gera and Mang, 1998). The information and communication technology of the 21st century has made possible the contraction of time and space.

Cross cultural communication is about dealing with people from other cultures in a way that minimises misunderstandings and maximises your potential to create strong cross cultural relationships.

We live in an increasingly complex world. One element of this complexity is the mixing of different cultures, languages and faiths. Within the business world intercultural communication is vital for success.



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