

Culture and communication



Intercultural communication

- ◆ **Intercultural communication** occurs when people of different cultural backgrounds interact, but this definition seems simplistic and redundant. The two root words are culture and communication. **Communication** always happens in a particular situation or context, our third building block.

Culture

- ◆ We define **culture** as learned patterns of perception, values and behaviors, shared by a group of people that are dynamic and heterogeneous.
- ◆ Rather **culture** is the unique way we have learned to eat, sleep and seek shelter because we are Turkish, Americans or Kazakh, male or female and so on.

- ◆ What do cultural groups learn and share? First, they share **perceptions**, or ways of looking at the world. Culture sometimes described as a sort of lens through which we view the world.
- ◆ The process of perception is composed of three phases: **selection, organization and interpretation.**

Culture


- ◆ Cultural patterns are shared.
- ◆ Culture is dynamic or changing and can be a source of conflict among different groups.

Embodied ethnocentrism


- ◆ When we are in our cultural surroundings we feel a sense of familiarity and certain level of comfort. We might characterize this feeling as a kind of **Embodied ethnocentrism** which is normal.

Communication


Communication is a symbolic process whereby meaning is shared and negotiated. Communication occurs whenever someone attributes meaning to another's words or actions. **Communication** is dynamic, may be unintentional and receiver-oriented.




Communication is a process involving several components: people who are communicating, a message that is being communicated (verbal or nonverbal), a channel through which the communication takes place and a context.

A stylized silhouette of a mountain range in shades of teal, located in the bottom right corner of the slide.

Values

- ◆ Values are beliefs that are shared by a cultural group. **Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck** studied how cultural values differ. They suggested that members of all cultural groups must answer 5 important questions:
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- ◆ **What is human nature?**
 - ◆ **What is the relationship between humans and nature?**
 - ◆ **What is the relationship between humans?**
 - ◆ **What is the preferred personality?**
 - ◆ **What is the orientation toward time?**
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Value orientation

Human Nature	Basically good	Mixture of good and evil	Basically evil
Relationship between Humans & Nature	Humans dominate	Harmony between the two	Nature dominates
Relationships between Humans	Individual	Group-oriented	Collateral
Preferred Personality	“Doing” : stress on action	“Growing” : stress on spiritual growth	“Being” : stress on who you are
Time orientation	Future-oriented	Present-oriented	Past-oriented

- ◆ **Dutch social psychologist Geert Hofstede has identified several additional cultural values: power distance; masculinity/ femininity; uncertainty avoidance and long-term/short-term orientation to life.**

Power Distance Low power distance Less hierarchy better	High power distance More hierarchy better
Masculinity/ femininity Femininity Fewer gender-specific roles Value quality of life, support for unfortunate	Masculinity More gender-specific roles Value achievement, ambition, acquisition of material goods
Uncertainty avoidance Low uncertainty avoidance Dislike rules, accept dissent Less formality	High uncertainty avoidance More extensive rules, limit dissent More formality
Long-term/short-term orientation to life Short-term orientation Truth over virtue Prefer quick results	Long-term orientation Virtue over truth Value perseverance and tenacity

Barriers to Intercultural Communication

- ◆ **Ethnocentrism, stereotyping, prejudice, discrimination.**
- ◆ **Ethnocentrism** is the belief that one's cultural group is superior to all other cultural groups. Believing that one's own country and culture are good is not bad in itself.
- ◆ **Stereotypes** are widely held beliefs about a group of people and are a form of generalization—a way of categorizing and processing information we receive about others in our daily life.

Barriers to Intercultural Communication

- ◆ **Prejudice** is a negative attitude toward a cultural group based on little or no experience. It is a prejudgment of sorts. Whereas stereotypes tell us what a group is like, prejudice tells us how we are likely to feel about that group.
- ◆ The behavior that results from stereotyping or prejudice- overt actions to exclude, avoid or distance oneself from other groups- is called **discrimination**. Discrimination may be based on racism or any other “isms” related to belonging to a cultural group (sexism, ageism, elitism).

Task:

- ◆ **Cultural groups and communication:** Identify the various cultural groups you belong to, both voluntary and involuntary. Choose two of them and think about each group and your membership in that group. Try to describe how belonging to that group influences your perception. For example, how is your worldview influenced by belonging to your family? By being Kazakh, Turkish, Russian etc.? Finally, describe how your communication with others is influenced by your membership in these two groups?