

HUMAN COMMUNICATION AND CULTURE

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Abstract: There are no mass media texts, messages, cues and portrayals that are free from cultural biases and objectives. Culture, communication and community are key concepts that are inter-related. In order to have proper relationships, culture plays a very important role as a means by which these relationships are expressed, but at the same time there must be adequate communication. In simple terms, globalization has made it necessary for people from different cultures and nations to interact and work together.

Keywords: culture, communication, media interpretation of culture, relationship

Introduction: The word culture, derived from Latin culture derived from the verb “colere” has many meanings. In 1952, Kroeber and Kluckhohn, limited to British uses, identified more than 160 definitions. The term “culture” refers to the complex collection of knowledge, folklore, language, rules, rituals, habits, lifestyles, attitudes, beliefs, and customs that link and give a common identity to a particular group of people at a specific point in time.

All social units develop a culture. Even in two-person relationships, a culture develops over time. In friendship and romantic relationships, for example, partners develop their own history, shared experiences, language patterns, rituals, habits, and customs that give that relationship a special character — a character that differentiates it in various ways from other relationships.

Communication derived from the Latin word “communicare” meaning “to share” is the act of conveying meanings from one entity or group to another through the use of mutually understood signs, symbols, and semiotic rules.

We are constantly communicating, in a wide range of different contexts, such as with each other (interpersonal communication), with different cultural groups or subgroups (intercultural communication), or to large audiences (mass communication), just to name a few. There is verbal communication and non-verbal communication.

In the literal sense, verbal communication is any communication that uses language to convey meaning. It can include oral communication, such as speaking to another person over the telephone, face-to-face discussions, interviews, debates, presentations and so on. It can also include written communication, such as letters and emails.

According to Wikipedia, non-verbal communication is the transmission of messages or signals through a nonverbal platform such as eye contact, facial expressions, gestures, posture, use of objects and body language. It includes the use of social cues, kinesics, distance and physical environments/appearance, of voice and of touch.

Relationship between culture and communication

Media and cultural studies have emerged as one of the most significant academic disciplines over the past quarter of a century. As culture gives an identity to a nation and media are the tools for its promotion or destruction, this area of communication discipline is best characterized as cultural studies (Andrew, 1989, p.2). In this academic arena, culture has been considered as a theoretical problem only because it proves to be socially problematic. Culture, as most communication scholars agree, forms the baseline from where the researchers must begin their analysis, if they want to understand the impact(s) of mass media on masses and their culture. Not only this, how media articulate the dominant values of a social system, what are the prevailing political ideologies and what social changes are taking place can be studied in the light of perspectives provided by the cultural studies to construct the views about world and human behaviour.

Culture plays a major role in your communication. The idea of culture as something that is shared means that it is vital to understand culture and communication in relation to one another. The relationship between culture and communication, in all its forms, is tightly interwoven and interlinked. We can see that communication enables the spread and reiteration of culture. Both communications and the media propagate the values and schemas of a culture through the repeated interaction and exchange enabled by the communications process. It is not in single instances of communication that culture is made, but rather in the repeated exchange of information and the reinforcement of the ideals and values it embodies, all conveyed within a particular moment.

Mass media do and do not alter our opinions at the same time. They do affect our attitudes and opinions in some circumstances, but not all of us receive same effects of media exposure. One of the main functions of mass media is to transfer the cultural heritage to future generations. Not only this, we talk with the past and at times with the future generations with the help of mass media by consulting historical records and leaving today's literature for future. In this way, the culture persists and propagates whereas mass media are the conduits through which this transmission takes place. And, mass media are not innocent and absolutely unbiased rather they alter and alter significantly the cultural transmission process. Mass media transfer the cultural norms and values of old generations through their contents. Almost all forms of mass communication perform this function to enlighten the masses about the successes and

failures of the past, and compare and contrast it with what was there in the past with what exists at present. This form of transmission of cultural values, knowledge and patterns is known as historical cultural transmission. The cultural transmission process does not end here; rather mass media inform their audience about other cultures, communities and nations. Such sharing of cultural traditions and systems among various cultural groups increases the chances of cultural change. This process is regarded as the contemporary cultural transmission which may be one to many — one cultural exposure to many, and many to one — many cultural systems are shown to a particular culture.

Mass media are the primary sources of information and are considered to be the builder of social realities. These realities have shared meanings among all those who are the objects or target of mass media. That's why, it is believed that every reality is 'constructed' or 'mediated' wherein mass media frame it 'in a predicted and patterned way' (McQuail 1994, p.331).

Cultural differences have many effects on communication. People with different cultural backgrounds communicate using different styles. Their language, words, gestures, and phrases may differ even in their application. Culture also shapes peoples' attitudes in times of conflict. While conflict is acceptable in some cultures, it is considered undesirable in others. People from different cultures also have different approaches to delivering and inquiring about information. Certain words or topics may be considered taboo in one culture but acceptable in another.

There are various aspects of cultures that affect how people exchange information, including:

Beliefs: One's culture informs one's beliefs, which are the things accepted as being true. Communicating with people who share your beliefs is easier than exchanging information with those who believe in significantly dissimilar things.

Habits: The customary things people do are regulated by their cultural beliefs and behavioral norms. While these habits are dynamic and adaptable in high-performance societies, they are less so in low-performance societies.

Behavioral norms: Each culture includes norms of behavior. As these shared standards of socially accepted conduct drive how people behave, irrational norms can be extremely difficult to address via communication.

Freedom: Individual freedom differs across cultures. This is because the beliefs, habits, and norms of behavior that comprise a culture directly affect the freedom of those within it. While less developed cultures normalize restricting the freedom of people, developed alternatives protect individual freedom. As you communicate with others, their freedom, or lack thereof, will affect how your information is interpreted, understood, and addressed.

Clothing: In a culture, the beliefs, habits, and behavioral norms of people support a dress code. In cohesive, healthy cultures, there is less interest in enforcing this standard, provided outliers avoid choosing clothing that attacks core cultural beliefs and norms. Communicating with people from a different culture in which individuals — particularly women — have been coerced on what to wear for a long period of time can be challenging. This is due to their beliefs that support their culture's regulation on apparel and disapprove of any article of clothing — including yours — if it differs.

Technology: Some cultures, such as European cultures, are comfortable with using computer technologies for all their work-based communications. In contrast, others prefer in-person interactions.

Happiness: As cultural characteristics include the shared beliefs, behavioral norms, and habits of a specific social group, they directly impact the happiness of the people within it. For example, a culture that normalizes reductions in personal autonomy, inequalities between males and females, and disrespect for each other's inalienable rights can make its people very unhappy. In the workplace, your happiness impacts your motivation, engagement, and productivity. Consequently, communicating with people who are unhappy due to their cultural issues — which you cannot fix — can be counterproductive.

Autonomy: Respecting the personal autonomy of another, which relates to their right to govern themselves and enjoy their inalienable rights, is a core belief and behavioral norm among strong cultures.

Communication across different cultures can be adversely affected by various [cultural barriers](#). These are the challenges that hamper communication between people with different cultural backgrounds. Some of these barriers are discussed below.

- **Language:** Speaking different languages can lead to misunderstandings. Although translation can help people understand the message, it may lead to distortion of meaning. When some people are more fluent than others in a language that is widely used, those who are less fluent may feel sidelined.

- **Ethnocentrism:** This refers to the tendency to view one's culture as superior to those of others. This makes people believe that they are right while others are wrong.

- **Stereotypes:** Stereotypes are the oversimplified perceptions of a certain culture. Most of these perceptions are held unconsciously. Although some of them may be positive, most of them are negative.

- **Prejudice:** Prejudice is expressed as negative feelings and attitudes towards people who belong to a certain group. This can be based on aspects such as social class, ethnicity, social class, and profession.

Understanding how to handle these issues is critical to ensure that they do not get in the way of effective communication and below are some tips in handling culture in communication:

Use technology that suits the culture. During cross-cultural communication, determine the extent to which a culture has contributed to modern technological innovations, progressed with them, and grown comfortable with using them when selecting your communication tools.

Develop strategies to deal with cultural differences. Identify cultural differences that have negative impacts on communication. Then, prepare strategies for handling them. Keep in mind that some cultural dissimilarities cannot be bridged. Focus on the ones you can handle.

Engage similar cultures. Due to the pervasive influence of culture on thinking and behavior, it makes more economic sense to work with similar cultures that share several communication styles and cultural aspects.

Evaluate respect for your autonomy. Assess the respect that potential communication partners have for your autonomy. To communicate effectively, engage with people who respect individual autonomy. They are likely to be easier to collaborate with than others whose cultures preclude respecting individual independence.

CONCLUSION

While all cultures are local, all communication is global. This notion carries strong bearings of unprecedented technological revolution that our age has witnessed. In contemporary 'global media environment', the 'mass media hold a power position' and are capable of changing or creating new social and cultural realities (Said, 1997, pp.135–73). Understanding the impact of culture in communication offers several benefits.

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