

CROSS – CULTURAL AWARENESS

Egamberdiyev Jasurbek

Teacher of Andijan state institute of foreign languages

Egamberdiyeva Irodaxon

Teacher of Andijan state institute of foreign languages

Yusupjonova Malohatoy

Student of Andijan state institute of foreign languages

Annotation : In this article you can learn meaning of cultural awareness, how to understand it and how to use it in our daily life.

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Introduction

Cultural awareness involves raising people's understanding of the influence our culture has on how we do things, including how we communicate, what foods we eat, or even how we go about our work. Being culturally aware means understanding why cultural diversity is important and recognising that not every person will do things in the same manner as we do. Being mindful of this diversity allows us to be more respectful of the way others operate based on their cultural backgrounds. While you may not be intimately familiar with other cultures, if you at least understand your own culture and how it affects you, you can take the first step in developing a sense of cultural awareness when it comes to interacting with people who may have a different background than yourself. Cultural awareness helps you understand yourself better, your weaknesses, your psychology, and how to become a better person. It also helps with cognitive flexibility, problem-solving, decision-making, and improved communication skills. In the professional world, many people, including medical staff, diplomats, teachers, and business professionals, find that being culturally aware has a positive influence on their ability to perform their duties. Essentially, any person with some form of cultural understanding will benefit because cultural awareness is all about helping people get along without misunderstandings, confusion, or poor decisions getting in the way.

Cultural safety refers to an environment that is safe for all people. An environment where there's no denial of or challenge to their identity or to who they are. It is a space that embraces the differences between people and allows for a shared experience of respect, acknowledgement, and understanding. A culturally safe environment allows people from different cultures to come together to work with dignity. However, the concepts of cultural safety and cultural awareness, while related, differ significantly. Being culturally aware refers to the initial point of creating a better understanding of other people's perspectives so that you're culturally mindful. Cultural

safety encompasses the actions that nurture, respect, and acknowledge the unique cultural identity of another individual to safely meet their needs, expectations, and rights. This involves working from the point of view of the other person, not only from your own. Cultural competence is the understanding that a person's perspective is shaped by complex personal experiences and their cultural background. It also involves the awareness of your own cultural assumptions when communicating in cross-cultural contexts. Intercultural competence is comprised of four key components, (knowledge, attitude, awareness, and interpersonal skills). There are also three capabilities, (conflict management, relationship building, and intercultural teamwork), and two supporting skills, (emotional intelligence and critical reflection) that apply across different domains, such as professional, private, and academic, when it comes to cultural competence. Being culturally aware is the starting point to ultimately reach such levels of competence, where you can fluidly interact with people from different backgrounds and cultures without an issue.

Cross-cultural communication can be prone to misunderstandings on both ends. But that issue can be avoided by considering other people's cultures when interacting and working with them. While we may prefer not to admit to doing so, most of us have had the experience of forming stereotypes about someone based on our own set of beliefs or preconceived ideas, rather than actually experiencing the person for who they truly are. Uncovering those stereotypes and recognising any explicit or unconscious bias is the key to becoming more culturally aware. Being culturally aware develops your interpersonal skills, making you more sensitive to other people's emotions. It allows you to improve your interactions and communication with others. Getting to know your colleagues and finding common ground is essential to do this. This process of developing cultural awareness is even more critical today, in the age of digital communication channels, where we often don't interact with others in a face-to-face manner. Cultural awareness matters for many reasons that influence the entire society. Hence, enhancing your cultural awareness is essential. The following points cover why cultural awareness matters.

- Effective communication

The great advantage of cultural awareness is it allows us to communicate effectively with people of different cultures. Lack of cultural awareness may lead us to misjudge people from other cultures. However, a lack of cultural awareness may lead to innumerable problems in communicating and understanding the intentions of others. As a result, cultural awareness helps us communicate and build strong relations with others.

- Respect for cultures

Being able to communicate with people from diverse cultures is not just enough. Cultural awareness allows us to respect various cultures. As a result, the people start supporting cultural differences and embrace new ways to get along in society. It helps people break down all the cultural barriers and integrate respectfully with diverse communities. In short, cultural awareness teaches us how to respect and appreciate others.

- Promotes leadership

Cultural awareness benefits people in leadership roles and management roles. For such roles, developing cultural awareness results in better outcomes. It helps them in making appropriate decisions and motivating employees. In such a way, leaders and managers can take decisions with a global mindset. The employees feel acknowledged and valued in the organization.

- Better workplace

As cultural awareness promotes leadership roles, the leaders promote a diverse work culture. Promoting diversity means allowing employees with different cultures to work together as a team equally. It results in turning the organization into a better workplace. Hence, the employees feel more motivated. So, the work is done more effectively.

- Self-awareness

Being culturally aware allows us to acknowledge our worldviews and heritage. We get a better understanding of the differences in the customs and beliefs of others. Exploring and educating ourselves with different cultures helps us to strengthen ourselves. Eventually, we discover that self-awareness and cultural awareness are tied-up with each other.

- Successful globalization

As we begin to explore the world, we begin to relate to people with cultural differences. As a result, the cultural connection becomes stronger and reduces the risk of any cultural conflicts. When we are culturally aware, we can consider what may be inappropriate to people with diverse backgrounds. Indirectly, this helps us globalize more easily and effectively and reduces the barriers.

Acknowledging and understanding diverse cultures improves communication and interaction among the employees. As a result, cultural awareness leads to a highly motivated workforce. Cultural awareness can be promoted in businesses by implementing the following:

- Training

The first and foremost task to promote cultural awareness in the workplace is to educate the employees. Companies should design a training program for the employees. It should include all the different ways to deal with diverse people. The training program must teach the employees how to work effectively in the increasingly diverse economy. It should cover all the topics, including communication, marketing, and negotiation skills. We provide such diversity and inclusion training to businesses.

- Policies

Ethics and policies have always been an important part of every organization. To ensure the employees are culturally aware, the next step is to create some cultural awareness policies and norms. Such policies provide a clear view of how employees from different backgrounds can interact with each other. All these anti-discriminatory policies serve all employees equal opportunities to work effectively.

- Religious holidays

The best way to promote cultural awareness is by celebrating diversity and cultures. During all the religious and cultural festivals, businesses should welcome the holiday. So that employees from different cultural backgrounds may not misunderstand the higher authority and avoid unwanted disputes. Businesses should respect all religions and cultures and treat them accordingly without discriminating.

- Communication

Clear and precise communication is always important. People from different cultural backgrounds have different physical appearances and communication styles. For instance, the way of greeting a senior in one culture may feel very respectful while the same in the other culture may feel very rude. So, while working with people from different parts of the world, it is important to be aware of the communication norms of various cultures. The businesses can avoid misunderstanding and confusion between the two parties by doing so. Developing cultural awareness among the employees enhances the productivity of the business. Cultural awareness among the employees promotes effective communication and unity in the workplace. Hence, it becomes easier for businesses to deal with global clients effectively. By understanding different cultures and beliefs, businesses create a diverse and inclusive culture. By creating anti-discriminatory policies, businesses can eliminate the differences among the employees.

Conclusion

In today's modern era, cultural awareness is gaining much importance. By being culturally aware, we emphasize diversity in different meaningful and beautiful ways. Cultural awareness is all about recognizing and understanding that we all have various values formed by our diverse cultural backgrounds. Cultural awareness makes it easy to explore the world. It allows us to understand the differences and acknowledge them. Being self-aware about different cultures prevents us from offending others. In this process, we can work more effectively across cultural lines. We get a better understanding and broader views of different cultures. As a result, we can build deeper connections with people worldwide. Cultural awareness promotes effective communication and successful globalization. Every business should prioritize cultivating cultural awareness. A culturally more diverse and inclusive environment allows organizations to collaborate and interact easily. Cultural diversity strengthens the work environment in the organizations. In this multicultural world, people feel interconnected with each other.

References

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