

Pragmatic Cross - Cultural Communication in the International Business Arena - Literature Review

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Abstract: *Challenges are immense with people in the constantly changing business environment, especially cross - cultural communications. In today's changing business scenario an increasing number of firms extends their business abroad in cross - culturally reflected international markets. There are cultural factors that act as invisible barriers in cross cultural business communications. Hence, a good understanding on the cultural differences is one of the most significant skills to develop to for a competitive advantage in international business. An organization that focuses on eliminating the cross - cultural communication barriers and that which is mindful of cultural diversity is the one that will succeed in a challenging business environment. This clearly presents comprehensive harmony and affluence while also presenting unpleasant consequences if not well managed. This paper is a collection of few literature analyses to find out the importance of communication in the national culture's influence on the workplace and behavior of people with different identities. The study discusses cross - cultural, socio - pragmatic information and concludes with an understanding of the effect of cross - cultural communication barriers on international business.*

Keywords: Cross culture, Socio - pragmatic, Business communication, Global Business

1. Introduction

Cross - cultural business communication has been the focus area for Globalization phenomena that brought upon growth and internationalization of businesses, which consequently resulted in basic and feasibility of examining cross - cultural communication. With the increase in business opportunities beyond national boundaries, several firms choose to expand their operations abroad often exclusive of admitting that the potential financial prosperity may turn into disastrous condition due to the consequences of cross - cultural communication with business partners outside of their own culture. Cross - cultural business communication is the discipline and methodology of communication between the people who belong to different cultures. A common delusion among the managers of small - scale firms is that business interaction is alleged to be universal and not affected by cultural differences. However, it is apparent that individuals brought up in different cultures imagine and conduct themselves inversely, even in business perspective. Harris and Moran (2007), authors of "Managing Cultural Differences", state that 'at the root of the issue, we are likely to find communication failures and cultural misunderstandings. Regrettably, some firms still do not place adequate importance on the issue of effective cross - cultural communication for more competent business operation. In particular, small and medium firms that choose to go international for growth or/and expansion of business, often fall target to cross - cultural communication barriers with international suppliers, retailers, customers, distributors and partners which, consecutively, leads to serious communication disasters and conflicts which may sometime result in termination of business relations. As businesses strive to achieve competitive advantage both domestically and globally, equipping managers with the critical communication skills seems to be on the top of the list to enhance performance and improve the quality of their relationships in organizations. This Paper is an exploration of few articles and research papers that connect to the topic of cross - cultural business communication.

2. Factors Affecting Pragmatism in Cross - Cultural Communication

Cross cultural communications can be studied in two perspectives: Socio - Cultural and Socio - Pragmatic levels. Culture is viewed as a shared set of beliefs, values, and behavioural patterns of society. In this perspective every country differs from the other in its own culture. It is inevitable to face cultural differences for a businessman as he encounters professional, social and cultural differences in the way negotiations and communication takes place. Socially or professionally inappropriate behaviour - even if unintentionally so - can threaten business opportunities (Schermerborn Jr, 1993: 487). Hence it poses a major challenge to the operations in conducting business across cultural boundaries. Some of the factors with cultural differences are:

- 1) **Clock:** for an effective cross - cultural communication, there is a need to understand the language of time. Time and the use of time differently is viewed differently in different parts of the world. Few may look at the clock and hour of business, while others may look at clock as standard for accomplishment with reference to meeting deadlines, business operational activity and times to transact.
- 2) **Space:** verbal and nonverbal conversations stand as a point of reference to the cross - cultural differences in the way people speak, read and listen to others communicate with them. Use of Proxemics, i. e., the space and distance that is used in communication. There is definite body language when strategically used, may create rapport and connection with the listeners, reinforce the message and enhance credibility and confidence of the communicator.
- 3) **Manners:** is the extent to which the person conducts himself in clarity, conciseness, politeness and orderly conversations. This also reflects the matters of social class, the organisation role and status the person holds in the conversation with the other person. Business communications involves trust factor, tone of the message, the posture of the communicator and nonverbal Behaviour determining the intent of business activity.

4) **Language:** English is considered as international language common to conduct global business. There is a need to express the language in clear, concise and completely courteous with specific vocabulary and proper grammatical structure that is vital in business communication. Language is a code of symbols, words and gestures that are exchange systems bound by the context. It is a kind of interaction between people with assumption of accuracy of expression of thoughts in words. These are few indicators of success in conducting business across cultural boundaries that depends on the ability to recognise and deal with cultural differences. The businessmen must be self-aware and cross-culturally sensitive in dealing with sensitive cultural differences across borders.

3. Review of Literature

1) Cultural Perspective of Business Communication

Susanne Niemeier, Charles P. Cambell (1988) mention in their article “**the cultural context of business communication**” that cultural differences play vital role in business communications and there are many ways in which inter cultural diplomat face problems. Culture and interculturality in connection with business communication styles is seen at all levels within the national borders that do not spontaneously coincide with cultural borders. However, this article aims at offering various analytical and practical approaches to the topic of intercultural business communication. Cambell suggests bridging the gap between the two types of cultures, national and international, by resorting to what he calls “Rhetorical Ethos”, which means to accommodate other cultural patterns of the world. The Rhetorical principle specified in this article states that ‘people from two cultures tend to inadvertently offend or at least perplex their business partners because they tacitly assume to share their cultural values’. The second part of the article focuses on interculturality where the business personnel actively participate in negotiation with international business partners.

2) Intercultural Competence of Business Communication

Sven Eisenhauer (2007) in his book “**Cross cultural business communication as a universal culture**” states that transfer of business activities across nations is growing at a rapid rate along with the additional things not only to enlarged worldwide trade, international, multinational and transnational business, but also to an increased demand for international workforce since firms have a need to hire those who hold global business skills in order to remain competitive in the global marketplace. It also mentions the fact that communication is a major cultural attribute on which cultural differences are recognized. The article written a decade ago does hold good to illustrate today’s working global environment with a culture diverse, workforce and its accompanied culture bias, difficulties and influences. Cultural dimensions are provided as instruments in order to understand that every state has a different culture. The findings in this article stated that there are always variations within each national model. Even with culture within each nationality, the distinction by countries as political, social and cultural entities seems adequate for cross national

comparative research. On the other part the findings stated that communication is the first cultural attribute in which cultural differences are recognized. It had been identified that differences in communication patterns are more obvious whether they are communicated verbally by using different language or non-verbally by using different facial expressions, gestures or postures. It also stated that classification of formal cultures can be linked to instrumental and to in-direct and high context cultures. Likewise classification of informal culture can be linked to expressive and to some extent of direct and low context cultures. A diversified workforce will create cross-cultural differences leading to cross-cultural communication.

3) Hurdles of Cross - Cultural Communication

Ibi Noraini, Zurina, Imran Maizura & Syahida Kamil (2014) “**A study on barriers of cross cultural communication in electronic based industry**”. As we read this article the authors are of the opinion that rapid growth in economic development and global trade scenario demand firms to expand & extend their businesses abroad and hire their employees from overseas, thereby creating a diversity of workforce. Although this research aims to analyze the barriers of cross-cultural communication in electronic-based companies, the study can be applied to new verticals of worldwide business. The purpose of this research appears to analyze the relationships between dimensions of national cultures, high and low context communications, multinational firm communication, language and communication system that affect cross-cultural communication in an organization. A global workplace typically has diverse religion, gender, belief, perspective, behavior and attitude, thus giving rise to problems and conflicts in cross-cultural communication. Based on Hofstede’s cultural dimensions theory, this research explores the effects of a society’s culture on the member’s value system and its relation to behavior. The five dimensions of cultural differences in the model such as the Power Distance; Uncertainty Avoidance; Individualism versus Collectivism; Masculinity versus Femininity and the Long versus Short - Term Orientation, aids the researcher to understand the differences of having the high and low framework in communication, multinational firm communication, language and communication system between different cultures and therefore barriers of cross-cultural communication in the internationalized company were noticed. There are countless challenges to elaborate managerial implications of cross-cultural management in companies having workforce diversity. Understanding the barriers creates awareness within an organization which can be interpreted that cultural differences result in highly potential conflicts by virtue of having the cultural differences are miscommunication, misunderstanding and misinterpretation thereby affecting the effectiveness of communication in their management. With different social backgrounds, they would not be aware and fully understand each other’s cultures and this is one of the key issues / barriers for business communication.

4) Sociological and Psychological Perspective of Cross - Cultural Business Communication

Radmila Jankovic (2017) in his article “**Cross cultural business communication – Sociological and Psychological**

aspects”, positions a global economy that sets new standards for corporate interdependence from the sociological and psychological side. Corporate Analysts argue that the key to global business success depends on effective cross - cultural etiquette and effective global workforce diversity management. Psychological studies define Cross cultural aspect as "the scientific study of human behavior and its transmission, taking into account the ways in which behaviors are shaped and influenced by social and cultural forces". Many researchers have proposed that the goals of cross - cultural psychology are to identify human behavior in cultural contexts, to discover psychological phenomena and to integrate psychological knowledge across borders. In the study, the Berry model, a bi - dimensional model constructed in a 2x2 matrix classifies attitudes of individuals and ethnic relations eventually leading to conflict and stress. The sociological aspect suggests that societies are sub culturally determined and cross - cultural differences between countries and their ethnicities are predominant. Researchers unearthed six main factors that determine intercultural competence, such as Empathy, Value/Respect, Concern in Local Culture, Flexibility, Patience, and Technical skill. Apart from these, there are four other factors that were identified among people who are successful in an intercultural world: Open - Mindedness, Sociability, Positive Self - Image, and Initiative. The cross - cultural schemes determine that sensitivity and willingness to alter one's own behavior for the betterment of relation is an indication of respect for the people of other cultures. DiMaggio developed cultural schemes "that focus on the interaction of shared cognitive structures and factors such as material culture, media messages and discussion that activate shared structures, Inter - cultural competencies and communications are valued very high in international business. The review on the above article clearly mentions that the socio - psychological factors in cross - cultural communication are interrelated and helps people to develop skills to work within different cultures, to explore and understand how and why differences exist and to promote understanding, for harmonious intercultural relations. major barriers for intercultural communication.

5) Key Issues in Cross Cultural Business Communications

Hongning & Sun Liu (2012) "Cross - cultural communication - with a focus on Swedish and Chinese employees" this research study was taken to understand and evaluate how different cultures influences the communication between employees in the working environment. The study begins with a background introduction which explains the growing business cooperation between China and Sweden and the need for efficient communication among individuals. The researchers mention that MNCs are the organisation who conduct business operations with different countries of cultural differences. Cultural conflicts take room if organizations mismanage cultural differences which will lead to a chaotic atmosphere hampering global relations are a larger perspective. One of the reasons why cultural differences make way is the individual experiences with conflicts in daily operation in some of the multinational organizations. These cultural differences are important factors that lead to cross - cultural communication failure. The study found that,

at work Swedish people tend to avoid aggressive communication, instead try to understand and support each other. Swedish management style is emphasized in two elements, empowering and coaching. It is interesting that the structure of Swedish organizations claims to be ambiguous. The key attributes of individuals are self - respect, skillfulness, self - control and flexible commitment. And when it comes to Chinese culture - Confucianism is generally considered as the foundation of Chinese culture and tradition. To develop a harmonious society by moderated communication process. "The Confucius values encompass moral cultivation, family and interpersonal relationships, respect for age and hierarchy, harmony and face". In this thesis, most common mentioned communication barrier among Chinese people is language. Language misunderstandings in society caused cultural differences. Another difference identified was that Swedish culture is known to lack hierarchy and provides an open and free communication between managers and subordinates for they regard the value of everyone is equal. While other culture values hierarchical management. Finally, the study concludes that the communication language is a major barrier among employees at work; Cultural differences caused different interpretation of the same words and also the way of handling conflicting opinion with managers is different between culturally different employees.

4. Conclusion

A good reading on cross - cultural business communications facilitates to know the discipline and methodology of communication patterns between the people who belong to different cultures. Various dimensions of culture in business and the approaches in which individuals and organizations prepare for cross cultural interaction tend to largely impact organization. Cross cultural communication is about dealing with people from other cultures in a way to minimize misunderstandings and create strong cross - cultural relationships among employees from various backgrounds. Therefore, it has been recognized that cross culture communication involves conversing, negotiating and exchange of information verbally or non - verbally with people of different cultures across borders in the global arena of Business Environment. Therefore, it may be concluded that, Communication is a language of interaction of human science. Cross - Culture has more options for communicating with people in different cultures and beliefs. For effective cross - border communication there is a need to develop and practice skills that facilitate and succeed in business goals. Global managers work towards their cross - cultural communicative competence especially in communicative competency, linguistic competency and intercultural competency to effectively communicate with their business partners at international level.

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