

Abstract

Introduction

According to the phenomenon that lots of international students are going to study in U.K, and more and more students are planning to take pre-session course. There is a problem that it seems that the students would rather to communicate with the people who have the similar cultural background with them. So that may lead to a thesis, which the cultural, language background may block communication between people with different cultural and language background. However, after our research about the phenomenon we found that is not true. Most people in pre-session course would like to communicate with people who have different cultural and language background. The reason why the misunderstanding happens about cultural and language difference blocks communication in pre-session course is that there is too many people who have the same cultural and language background in our pre-session course. So when we often see that same cultural and language background people always communicate together. Moreover most international students think that they can benefit from intercultural communication. Finally, some recommendation about enhancing the level of intercultural communication will be given in the end of essay.

1 Background

2 Aims

The purpose of the research was first to investigate the reality about Is it true that cultural and language difference blocks communication between students in pre-session course. and if it is not, what is the real situation in pre-session course? Furthermore, the recommendation will be given to improve the level of communication between people with different cultural background.

3 Method

4 Findings

Problems of intercultural communication

The problems in intercultural communication usually come from problems in message transmission. In communication between people of the same culture, the person who receives the message interprets it based on values, beliefs, and expectations for behavior similar to those of the person who sent the message. When this happens, the way the message is interpreted by the

receiver is likely to be fairly similar to what the speaker intended. However, when the receiver of the message is a person from a different culture, the receiver uses information from his or her culture to interpret the message. The message that the receiver interprets may be very different from what the speaker intended.

Whether the message is misinterpreted depends, in part, on how different the cultures are. An American and an English-speaking Canadian are likely have a lot of cultural beliefs, values, and knowledge in common--though there are differences between them. An American and a French-speaking Canadian come from cultures that are slightly more different. An American and a German are more different, and an American and a person from China even more so. However, the situation is not really so simple. A Chinese farmer and an American farmer may have many differences between them--language, religion, philosophy, and social attitudes, for example--but they would also be likely to have things in common. In fact, they would probably have things in common that the American farmer would not have in common with, for example, an American doctor.

Influences of Communication

More specifically, communication between people of different cultures can vary according to: □perception□verbal language□, and □nonverbal processes□.

Perception

Perception. Perception is the process by which a person selects, evaluates, and organizes information from the environment. To a great extent, our perception is influenced by our culture. For example, the characteristics that determine beauty vary in different cultures. Centuries ago in Japan, women blackened their teeth, and this was considered beautiful. Today, perceptions of beauty have changed, and that is not considered beautiful. When most Americans look at snow, they just see snow. However, Eskimos have more than 15 different words for snow, because they perceive a variety of differences in snow. Similarly, the Japanese language has many different words for rain. People in different cultures have differences in their perceptions, and these can cause difficulties in intercultural communication.

Belief and value systems. Beliefs and values, of course, vary within each culture, but there are also beliefs and values that are common to most of the people in the one culture. They define what is good or bad, useful or useless, right or wrong, etc. These beliefs and values also influence our behavior. In American culture, workers are supposed to arrive at work at a specified time, parents are supposed to make sure their children do their homework, and people are supposed to be polite when they make a request that would require the hearer to go to a lot of trouble. Differences in these expectations can lead to difficulties between people of different cultures.

Verbal Language

Language is the most obvious--if not the most important--cultural barrier. It is obvious

that people of different cultures must have a common language in order to communicate, and some misunderstandings between people of different cultures can be traced to language barriers. However, even people with the same native language may use different grammatical forms or different expressions, making it difficult for them to understand each other at times.

Nonverbal Processes

While language is the primary means of communication, nonverbal behavior also communicates. Nonverbal patterns include gestures, facial expression, eye contact, movement, touching, and the use of space and time. Gestures are an obvious source of misunderstanding, because they may have different meanings. However, other forms of nonverbal communication may cause particular difficulty, partly because we do not think about them much. Therefore, we may not be able to figure out what is causing the misunderstanding or why we feel uncomfortable. For example, patterns of touching vary a great deal in different cultures. In some cultures, people frequently touch, kiss, and hold hands in public. In other countries, this is not acceptable. In some cultures, people stand very close together when they talk, but in other cultures, they stand relatively far apart. In some cultures, a person who looks down while talking appears dishonest, while in other cultures, looking down shows respect. In some cultures, you are expected to be on time for an appointment, but in other cultures, you are expected to be late. All of these differences have the potential to cause problems.

Almost all conflicts involve communication problems, as both a cause and an effect. Misunderstandings, resulting from poor communication, can easily cause a conflict or make it worse. Further, once a conflict has started, communication problems often develop because people in conflict do not communicate with each other as frequently, as openly, and as accurately as they do when relationships are not strained. Thus communication is central to most conflict situations. Communication involves at least two parties--the speaker and the listener.

Speakers often are not clear themselves about what they mean, which almost assures that what they say will be unclear as well. Even when people know what they mean, they often do not say it as clearly as they should. They may hide their true feelings or ideas intentionally or unintentionally. Either way, people often get confused about other people's messages. This is especially common when people from different cultures try to communicate. Even if their languages are the same, culture acts like a lens through which we see and interpret the world. If their cultures are different, it is easy for the same statement to mean one thing to one person and something different to someone else. Thus intercultural communication is especially prone to errors.

Listeners also are sources of communication problems. People often fail to listen carefully. They may assume they know what the other person is saying or will say (because they have heard it before, or they assume that one person is "just like" another person from the same group). Also, when people are in conflict, they often concentrate more on what they are going to say in response to their opponent's statement, rather than listening to their opponents' words with full attention. The result, again, is misunderstandings, and often unnecessary escalation of a conflict.

5 Conclusion

6 Recommendation

Recommendation

Learn to be a good listener- Listening is more than just hearing.

While everyone may be speaking English, words can have different meanings depending on geographic origin, age, culture and ethnicity. Do not assume you understand without checking it out first. Listening is an action. Use statements like "If I understand you correctly, you are saying.....". Ask clarifying questions "Do you mean?", If you are not sure of the intention of their words.

Make sure you are understood- Be clear that both of you are agreeing to the same things. Instead of telling an employee you will talk to them later, set up a specific time. Later means different things to different people. Be careful using slang or idioms when communicating with people whose cultures are different than yours or be sure they comprehend your meaning. When you ask an employee to do an important task, getting a yes doesn't necessarily connote understanding. Ask open ended questions, like "how will you accomplish this?"

Let people know what they say is valuable- Give feedback. Let them know if you like their ideas or their comments. Make sure they know that you listened to them. This helps to make employees feel valued. If you can't understand them because of their accent, let them know what they are saying is important to you, and ask them to repeat it slowly. You may feel uncomfortable at first, but most people won't mind repeating if it means they will better be heard. I was at a new restaurant recently, and brought three friends. Out of four orders, the server got three wrong. When we told him, he got defensive and said he didn't understand me. He could have asked me to say my order again. My friends wanted to leave but I called the manager over. The manager had him bring the right orders, but berated him in front of everyone. No wonder the service was so bad. The manager didn't communicate well with her staff, and in turn the staff didn't value the customers. We, in turn have never been back to that restaurant or the two others owned by the same people.

Check your assumptions and biases- Everyone has assumptions and biases, based on our backgrounds, age, media, experiences, and what we hear. If not checked, these biases and assumptions can affect how we communicate with other people. Be willing to look at yours, and their impact on your relationships with people different than you. Are there cultures that you are less comfortable with? Do you avoid talking to people from those cultures or give them less time and credibility? If you have conflicts between people on your staff from different cultures, or customers do you tend to believe the side that is most like your own culture? I was entering a restaurant when I saw an argument between a customer and a parking valet. The customer said his car was stolen and accused the valet, who was not fluent in English. The valet was also from a culture that considered eye contact disrespectful. When the manager came out to investigate, he took the customer aside and said referring to the valet "He knows what happened. You could tell he's lying because he won't look us in the eye. I bet he understands English perfectly, but is pretending so he won't get caught". When the police came they discovered that the car had been towed, because the patron had parked illegally. Neither the customer nor the manager apologized to the parking valet.

