

跨文化交流入门

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INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

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序

放眼今天的世界,“全球化”已成不可抗拒的趋势,其浪潮汹涌澎湃,欲将世界各地不同文化的人群统统卷入其中。不管愿意不愿意,几乎谁都不可避免地要和来自不同文化背景的人们进行交往,跨文化交流正在成为越来越普遍的日常现实。

然而,文化之间的差异却往往会给交际造成意想不到的困难与问题,误解、困惑、矛盾甚至冲突也因此时有发生。不同文化群体的人们能否在“地球村”这个人类拥有的唯一家园中和平共处,共同努力来解决关系人类生存的一系列问题,在很大程度上要取决于我们能否有效地进行交往并逐步相互理解。

因此,培养跨文化意识,发展跨文化交流能力,学会与来自不同文化背景的人进行交往,对于生活在21世纪、肩负着人类未来希望的年轻学子来说,就显得尤为重要。不管他们所学专业是什么,将来从事何种职业,具备超越文化局限的眼光和意识,拥有跨文化交流的知识和技能,可以说都是十分必要的,其意义无论怎么强调都不过分。

这部英文教材《跨文化交流入门》,比较系统、全面地介绍了跨文化交流及其相关问题,并提供大量实际案例分析,使理论与实践有机地结合在一起。我们希望,这部教材能够有助于大学生们认识人类交际活动的重要性、丰富性、复杂性,了解文化差异对交际活动的制约和影响,使他们可以一方面提高运用英语获取知识信息、表述意见观点、分析问题和解决问题的技能水平,另一方面又能对跨文化交流有较为全面的了解与认识,形成和发展对文化差异的敏感和宽容以及处理文化差异问题的灵活性,全面提高综合素质,最终具备与不同文化背景人们进行广泛、深入国际交流的能力。本书也适合一切具有中级及以上英语水平、对跨文化交流感兴趣的学生和其他人士阅读、学习。

由于编者的水平和能力有限,书中疏漏与谬误仍在所难免,敬请使用者批评指出,以便今后进一步改进和完善。

编者

2017年3月于浙江大学

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Chapter 1

Communicating in the Global Village

Our most basic common link is that we all inhabit this planet.

—John F. Kennedy



Chapter 1 Communicating in the Global Village

Preview Questions

1. What problems have you ever had when communicating with others?
2. How would you communicate with someone who does not share the same experiences with you?
3. Why do you think we have to study intercultural communication?

Text A

What Is Intercultural Communication

With the world becoming smaller, many young people decide to continue their studies abroad. Studying in a different country is something that sounds very exciting to young people. Many of those who leave their home to study in another country think that they are going to have a lot of fun. Certainly, it is a new experience, which brings them the opportunity of discovering new things and a feeling of freedom. In spite of these advantages, there will also be some problems and difficulties when they are actually involved in intercultural communication.

Intercultural communication is communication between members of different cultures. This definition is simple, but the process is complex. Intercultural communication involves differing perceptions, attitudes, and interpretations. We know that even two people from the same culture can have communication problems.

Suppose that you're planning to study in a country about which you know very little. You are sophisticated enough to expect that the spoken language and probably some gestures will be different. You know, too, that customs will be different, but you are not sure exactly what this will mean. At least there will be interesting things to take pictures of or write home about. The climate and foods will be different, of course, but these differences are attractions and are not really problems.

From the moment you arrive, your cultural and personal background will influence everything you expect and a great deal of what you do and do not do. Most of the people you meet will be similarly influenced by their own backgrounds, culturally, socially, and personally.

If some of the people you meet think you act a little strangely, they may never know whether you are peculiar, or whether most people from your country are strange, or whether all “foreigners” are strange.

Most of what you do in a foreign country will be “what comes naturally,” which means what you have always done or seen others do back home. Most of our behavior is outside of our awareness so that “normal behavior” means behavior according to the norms of our culture and not what is done everywhere or done “naturally.” Still, to the extent that you are aware of the possibilities of different behavior in the land you are visiting, you may be unusually self-conscious of some of this “normal behavior.”

Cultures do not communicate; individuals do. Everyone has a unique style of communication, but cultures determine a general style for their members. The relationship of the individual to his culture is analogous to that between an actor and his director. The actor puts his own personality into his acting but is nevertheless influenced by the director. We are not always aware of the subtle influences of our culture. Likewise, we may not perceive that others are influenced by their cultures as well.

Problems and misinterpretations do not result every time members from two cultures communicate. However, when cultural conflicts do arise, they may be perceived as personal rather than cultural. In the following example it is a cultural misunderstanding that creates negative feelings and confusion:

Yaser, an international student from Jordan, first met Steve in their chemistry class at an American university. He was excited to get to know an American, for he wanted to learn more about American culture. Yaser hoped that he and Steve would become good friends.

At first, Steve seemed very friendly. He always greeted Yaser warmly before class. Sometimes he offered to study with Yaser, and even invited Yaser to eat lunch with him. But after the semester was over, Steve seemed more distant. The two former classmates didn't see each other very much at school. One day Yaser decided to call Steve. Steve didn't seem very interested in talking to him. Yaser was hurt by Steve's change of attitude. “Steve said we were friends,” Yaser complained. “And I said friends were friends forever.”

This misunderstanding was due to Yaser's failure to understand that for Americans a friendship may be superficial, casual, situational as well as deep and enduring. If he had known more about American culture, he could have avoided misunderstanding Steve.

Some misunderstandings are insignificant and can be easily ignored or remedied. Other conflicts are more serious in that they can cause misinterpretations and create **persistent** negative attitudes toward foreigners.

Difficulties in intercultural communication arise when there is little or no awareness of divergent cultural values and beliefs. In cross-cultural interaction, speakers sometimes assume that what they believe is right, because they have grown up thinking their way is the best. This

ethnocentric assumption can result in negative judgments about other cultures.

In the following example, two women demonstrate that they cannot understand each other's points of view. In Rosamine's culture children live with their parents until marriage because dependence on parents is considered positive. In Merita's culture children leave home when they are eighteen because independence and self-reliance are considered positive.

ROSAMINE: I think it's terrible that in your country children leave their parents when they're so young. Something that shocks me even more is that many parents want their children to leave home. I can't understand why children and parents don't like each other in your country.

MERITA: In your country parents don't allow their children to become independent. Parents keep their children protected until the children get married. How are young people in your country supposed to learn about life that way?

Both women are insensitive to each other's values concerning family life. They have been raised and conditioned according to cultural norms. Therefore, each has a different view of what is right.

Preventing cultural conflicts is possible with increased awareness of our own attitudes as well as sensitivity to cross-cultural differences. Developing intercultural sensitivity does not mean that we need to lose our cultural identities—but rather that we recognize cultural influences within ourselves and within others.

(Based on D. R. Levine & M. B. Adelman; *Beyond Language*, Chapter 9)

Notes

sophisticated 老练的, 富有经验的

analogous to... 与……相似的

persistent 持续存在的

divergent 有分歧的; 有差异的

ethnocentric 有种族或民族优越感的

identity 身份, 特性

Questions

1. What kind of problems are people likely to meet when they visit a foreign country?
2. How can you understand the sentence "The definition of intercultural communication is simple, but the process is complex"?
3. What may lead to problems or difficulties in intercultural communication?

Text B

The Era of Intercultural Communication

In the past most human beings were born, lived, and died within a limited geographical area, never encountering people of other faces and/or cultural backgrounds. Such an existence, however, no longer prevails in the world. Even members of once isolated groups of people now frequently have contact with members of other cultural groups.

H.M. McLuhan characterized today's world as a "global village" because of the rapid expansion of worldwide transportation and communication networks. We can now board a plane and fly anywhere in the world in a matter of hours. Communication satellites, sophisticated television transmission equipment, and the World Wide Web now allow people throughout the world to share information and ideas at the same time.

Nowadays, people all over the world are faced with the same environmental issues, such as pollution, that affect all cultures. It has become clear that pollution does not observe geographic and cultural boundaries. We are beginning to realize that we must work together to solve these problems or face common disasters.

As the population of the world has increased, it has become more difficult to remain detached and isolated from global tensions and conflicts. When people of different nationalities and ethnic origins, who frequently speak different languages and hold different convictions, attempt to work and live together, conflicts can easily arise. Recent events have shown that hostility anywhere has the potential to become hostility everywhere.

And we should not forget that the reality of a global economy makes today's contacts far more commonplace than in any other period of the world's history. Multinational corporations now participate in various international business arrangements. Each country's economy is now tied to the economic fortunes of others. This means that it would not be unusual for you to work for an organization that does business in many countries or for you to conduct business in remote parts of the world.

In a world of international interdependence, the ability to understand and communicate effectively with people from other cultures takes on extreme urgency. However, we may find intercultural communication different from communication within our own cultural group. Even if we overcome the natural barriers of language difference, we may fail to understand and to be understood. Misunderstanding may even become the rule rather than the exception. And, if we are unaware of the significant role culture plays in communication, we may place the blame for communication failure on other people.

It is recognized widely that one of the characteristics separating humans from other animals is our development of culture. The development of human culture is made possible through

communication, and it is through communication that culture is transmitted from one generation to another. Culture and communication are intertwined so closely that E. Hall maintains that “culture is communication” and “communication is culture.”

In other words, we communicate the way we do because we are raised in a particular culture and learn its language, rules, and norms. Because we learn the language, rules, and norms of our culture by a very early age (between five and ten years old), however, we generally are unaware of how culture influences our behavior in general and our communication in particular.

When we communicate with people from other cultures, we often are confronted with languages, rules, and norms different from our own. Confronting these differences can be a source of insight into the rules and norms of our own culture, as well as being a source of frustration or gratification.

Therefore, in order to minimize misunderstandings when we communicate with people from other cultures, what we have to learn is to understand culture, communication, how culture influences communication, and the process of communication between people from different cultures. Such knowledge is extremely important. In fact, it is necessary if we are to comprehend fully the daily events of today’s multicultural world. It will help us analyze our intercultural encounters in order to determine where misunderstandings occur and determine how these misunderstandings can be minimized in future interactions. This is important not only to decrease misunderstandings but also to make the world a safer place for all of us to live.

(Adapted from W. B. Gudykunst & Y. Y. Kim: *Communicating with Strangers*, Introduction)

Notes

prevail 盛行, 流行

H. M. McLuhan 麦克卢汉 (1911—1980),
加拿大传播学家

the rule rather than the exception 常态而
非例外

intertwine 紧密相连

E. Hall 霍尔 (1914—2009), 美国人类学家

gratification 满意; 喜悦

Questions

1. Which changes have occurred to people’s way of life in the modern era? Which factors lead to these changes?
2. Why is intercultural understanding important in modern society?
3. How can you understand the relationship between communication and culture in this global era?

Exploration

“Where are you from?” This is what people often ask each other. Why do you think people do it? Nowadays people are much more mobile than before. It is natural that people from different places have to work and live together. Suppose you are a native of the place where you are now, how would you view and treat people who have come from other places and look somewhat different from you do? If you are not a native of the place, how would you like to be treated by the local people?

Intercultural communication includes communication between people of different groups living within the same society. The social harmony that we are striving to achieve depends very much on communicating successfully with one another. Are there any people in our society who have lived among us but seldom been treated seriously by us? Are you curious about how people of other social groups live? Do you often communicate with persons belonging to a different social group? How do you usually do when communicating with them?

Cases for Discussion

Case 1

Professor Lin has published a book on the differences between Chinese and American culture. One day, he met Andrew who was teaching English in China. When Andrew found that Professor Lin was the author of the book that he had been trying to buy, he asked Professor Lin whether Professor Lin had any spare copies that he could buy because all the bookstores he went to had run out of the book.

Professor Lin promised that he would send Andrew a copy of his book. A week later, Andrew received a book along with a note that said the book was a gift. Andrew was uncomfortable about this and called Professor Lin to thank him.

Questions

1. Why was Andrew uncomfortable when receiving the book and the note sent by Professor Lin?
2. If you were Professor Lin, what would you do to avoid this?

Case 2

A young Japanese student came to the United States, and he was overwhelmed by the cordial reception he was given. He said, “The American people are wonderful. They are so

warm, so friendly—much beyond my expectations.”

Some time later while traveling in the West, this same young man had dinner with an American family and remarked that he greatly admired the country’s efficiency, organization, and accomplishment. But, he said, there was one thing he would never quite understand, and that was why Americans were so cold and distant. His host was deeply hurt.

The point here is that both the first and last statements by the young man are typical. Very often, upon arrival in this country the foreign visitors are astonished by the warmth and friendliness of the American people. But often after a few months they begin to feel homesick and lonely, and they blame the Americans for causing these feelings by being cold. Now, why is this?

Questions

1. What had made the Japanese young man change his view about Americans?
2. What can you infer about American friendship based on this case?

Case 3

An American university student Tom is active in a foreign student club at his university and has several good friends from different countries. One of them tells Tom his parents and sister will be visiting, and he asks Tom if he would like to meet them. Tom invites all of them to visit his home one afternoon.

They arrive and present him with a nicely wrapped gift. Tom tells them they needn’t have brought anything, but thanks them and proceeds to open the gift, which turns out to be a very pretty vase from their country. He thanks them again. He senses some awkwardness and realizes that he has not offered them anything to drink. “Would you like coffee or tea or a soft drink?” he asks. They all refuse. Things seem more awkward now. But he talks a little of their country, about studies at the university, about the cost of living, and eventually the father whispers something to his son. “I think we must be leaving to return to the hotel,” he says. Everybody stands up, shakes hands, and they start to leave. “Please come and visit again,” Tom says as he stands up and watches the family walk to the door, open it, and disappear down the hall.

Two days later, in a very indirect way, Tom learns from another friend that the visitors thought he was a rude host.

Questions

1. Why is Tom considered a rude host by his visitors? Try to figure out at least three things among the following Tom does that are regarded to be impolite.
 - a. Tom invites them to visit his home but does not invite them to have dinner with him.

- b. Tom opens the gift as soon as he is presented with it.
 - c. Tom thanks them only twice for the gift.
 - d. Tom does not make a second offer of drinks when they refuse the first.
 - e. Tom talks about the cost of living in the U.S.A.
 - f. Tom does not ask them to stay longer when they say they must be leaving.
 - g. Tom does not go out to see them off.
 - h. Tom does not promise to return them a visit later.
2. How can you explain the fact that Tom is misunderstood when he actually wants to be kind and friendly to the visitors?

Readings for Further Study

1

Discovering Problems in Intercultural Communication

While visiting Egypt, Richard, an engineer from the United States, was invited to a spectacular dinner at the home of an Egyptian friend. And what a dinner it was! Clearly the host and hostess had gone out of their way to entertain him. Yet, as he was leaving their home he made a special effort to thank them for their dinner and sensed something he said was wrong. Something about his sincere compliments was misunderstood.

In Japan he had an even less pleasant experience though he thought he had handled it well. A number of serious mistakes had occurred in a project he was supervising. While the fault did not lie with any one person, he was a supervisor and at least partly to blame. At a special meeting called to discuss the problem, poor Richard made an effort to explain in detail why he had done what he had done. He wanted to show that anybody in the same situation could have made the same mistake and to tacitly suggest that he should not be blamed unduly. He even went to the trouble of distributing materials which explained the situation rather clearly. And yet, even during his explanation, he sensed that something he was saying or doing was wrong.

Even in England where he felt more at home, where he had no problems with language, this kind of misunderstanding occurred. He had been invited to take tea with one of his colleagues, a purely social, relaxed occasion. Tea was served along with sugar and cream. As he helped himself to some sugar and cream, he again sensed he had done something wrong. But what went wrong?

We should know that in Egypt as in many cultures, the human relationship is valued so highly that it is not expressed in an objective and impersonal way. While Americans certainly value human relationships, they are more likely to speak of them in less personal, more objective terms. In this case, Richard's mistake might be that he chose to praise the food itself rather than the total evening, for which the food was simply the setting or excuse. For his host and hostess it was as if he had attended an art exhibit and complimented the artist by saying,

“What beautiful frames your pictures are in.”

In Japan the situation may be more complicated. For this example we can simply say that Japanese people value order and harmony among persons in a group, and that the organization itself—be it a family or a corporation—is more valued than the characteristics of any particular member. While this feeling is not *alien* to Americans—or to any society—Americans stress individuality as a value and are apt to assert individual differences when they seem *justifiably* in conflict with the goals or values of the group. In this case, Richard’s mistake was in making great efforts to defend himself. Let the others assume that the errors were not intentional, but it is not right to defend yourself, even when your unstated intent is to assist the group by warning others of similar mistakes. A simple apology and acceptance of the blame would have been appropriate.

When it comes to England, though there are some significant differences in language and language style, we expect fewer problems between Americans and Englishmen than between Americans and almost any other group. In this case we might look beyond the gesture of taking sugar or cream to the values expressed in this gesture: for Americans, “Help yourself”; for the English counterpart, “Be my guest.” American and English people equally enjoy entertaining and being entertained but they differ somewhat in the value of the distinction. Typically, the ideal guest at an American party is one who “makes himself at home,” even to the point of answering the door or fixing his own drink. For persons in many other societies, including at least this English host, such guest behavior is *presumptuous* or rude.

In analyzing apparent problems of communication across cultures, it is all too tempting to look first for difficulties posed by language misinterpretation or assume some nonverbal indiscretion. But we have tried to suggest through these brief discussions of Richard’s problems that the misunderstanding or misbehavior more likely resides elsewhere, in the subtler but consistent cultural patterns of behavior that become understandable when we appreciate difference in cultural values. Thus what we first need, in attempting to analyze any such situation, is not necessarily more language skills or more information about a particular culture, but rather an openness to alternatives to our own conventional behavior. If we appreciate the logic of our own actions, we can more quickly imagine alternatives equally consistent with other values.

Notes

spectacular 相当丰盛的;壮观的

tacitly 心照不宣地,不言而喻地

unduly 过度地

alien 相异的,不熟悉的

justifiably 正当地;情有可原地

presumptuous 专横的

indiscretion 不慎重;不明智

Questions

1. Why were Richard's sincere compliments misunderstood in the Egyptian family?
2. What was wrong in the way Richard dealt with the problem in Japan?
3. Which behavior was considered improper in England when Richard was taking tea?
4. Do you think it is always right or possible for us to do as the Romans do when in Rome?

2

Communicating across Cultures in Today's World

Many years ago, the word "neighbor" referred to people very much like one's self—similar in dress, in diet, in custom, in language—who happened to live next door. Today relatively few people are surrounded by neighbors who are cultural replicas of themselves. Tomorrow we can expect to spend most of our lives in the company of neighbors who will speak in a different tongue, seek different values, move at a different pace, and interact according to a different norm. Within a decade or two the probability of spending part of one's life in a foreign culture will exceed the probability a hundred years ago of ever leaving the town in which one was born.

The technological feasibility of such a global village is no longer in doubt. The means already exist: in telecommunication systems linking the world by satellite, in aircraft capable of moving people faster than the speed of sound, in computers which can disgorge facts more rapidly than men can formulate their questions. The methods for bringing people closer physically and electronically are clearly at hand. What is in doubt is whether the erosion of cultural boundaries through technology will bring the realization of a dream or a nightmare. Will a global village be a mere collection or a true community of men? Will its residents be neighbors capable of respecting and utilizing their differences, or clusters of strangers living in ghettos and united only in their antipathies for others?

It has taken centuries to learn how to live harmoniously in the family, the tribe, the city state, and the nation. And now we are forced into a great leap from the mutual suspicion and hostility that have marked the past relations between peoples into a world in which mutual respect and comprehension are requisite.

Even events of recent decades provide little basis for optimism. Increasing contact has brought no millennium in human relations. If anything, it has appeared to intensify the divisions among people rather than to create a broader intimacy. Every new reduction in physical distance has made us more painfully aware of the psychic distance that divides people and has increased alarm over real or imagined differences. Wider access to more people will be a doubtful victory if human beings find they have nothing to say to one another or cannot stand to listen to each other.

In the world of tomorrow we can expect to live—not merely vacation—in societies which seek different values and abide by different codes. There we will be surrounded by foreigners for long periods of time, working with others in the closest possible relationships. If people currently show little tolerance or talent for encounters with alien cultures, how can they learn to deal with constant and inescapable coexistence?

Anyone who has truly struggled to comprehend another person—even those closest and most like himself or herself—will appreciate the immensity of the challenge of intercultural communication. Human understanding is by no means guaranteed because communicators share the same dictionary. (Within the United States, where people inhabit a common territory and possess a common language, mutual understanding among Mexican Americans, White Americans, Black Americans, Indian Americans—to say nothing of old and young, poor and rich, male and female, pro-establishment and anti-establishment cultures—is a sporadic and unreliable occurrence.)

As we move or are driven toward a global village and increasingly frequent cultural contact, we need more than simply greater factual knowledge of each other. We need, more specifically, to identify what distinguish one culture from another. For to grasp the way in which other cultures perceive the world, and the assumptions and values that are the foundation of these perceptions, is to gain access to the experience of other human beings. Access to the world view and the communicative style of other cultures may not only enlarge our own way of experiencing the world but enable us to maintain constructive relationships with societies that operate according to a different logic than our own.

When people communicate between cultures, where communicative rules as well as the substance of experience differs, the problems multiply. But so, too, does the number of interpretations and alternatives. If it is true that the more people differ the harder it is for them to understand each other, it is equally true that the more they differ the more they have to teach and learn from each other. To do so, of course, there must be mutual respect and sufficient curiosity to overcome the frustrations that occur as they flounder from one misunderstanding to another.

(Adapted from D. C. Barnlund: *Communication in a Global Village*)

Notes

replica 一模一样的人或物

disgorge 交出, 拿出

antipathy 反感, 厌恶

millennium 幸福时代

sporadic 偶尔发生的

flounder 胡乱地说话或做事