

**COMMUNICATION**  
**BETWEEN CULTURES**

**LARRY A. SAMOVAR**

**RICHARD E. PORTER**



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# COMMUNICATION BETWEEN CULTURES

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## PREFACE

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*Culture, the acquainting ourselves with the best that has been known and said in the world, and thus with the history of the human spirit.*

MATTHEW ARNOLD

**T**his is a book about communication. More specifically, this is a book about interpersonal intercultural communication. Because many who read this book are not communication majors, we tend to discuss specific communication principles first in each chapter and then apply the principles to interpersonal aspects of intercultural communication. This book

is intended for anyone whose professional or private life is likely to include encounters with people from cultures or co-cultures different from his or her own. We therefore deal both with communication between international cultures and communication between co-cultures within the United States.

We have worked together in the field of intercultural communication for over twenty years and have seen many changes occur. Culture, we have come to believe, is a personal matter, and we have therefore developed our own philosophy about intercultural communication. We have stated our positions at times and make no apologies for having adopted those positions. We also have tried to keep our own ethnocentrism in check, but for those instances in which it has leaked through, we do apologize.

### **Rationale**

Worldwide interest in intercultural communication grows out of two assumptions. The first is that we live in an age when changes in technology, travel, economic and political systems, immigration patterns, and population density have created a world in which we increasingly interact with people from different cultures. Simply pause and look around to see the truth of this assertion. Second, people now know that these diverse backgrounds influence the communication act in subtle and profound ways. That is to say, one's cultural perceptions and experiences help determine how one sends and receives messages.

### **Approach**

Fundamental to our approach to intercultural communication is the belief that interpersonal communication involves action, that it is something we do with and to one another. Whether we are generating words or movements we are creating and producing action. Any study of communication, therefore, must include information about the interactive behaviors all parties are producing as well as the consequences of those behaviors.

Because we are in control of many of our actions, we can improve communication. Hence, this book takes a very pragmatic view of intercultural communication. We see it as interpersonal interaction in which cultural diversity governs the rules by which people attempt to achieve their communication goals. We have attempted throughout this book to translate ideas and concepts

into practice—practice that can improve your communication and foster the attainment of your communicative purposes.

### **Philosophy**

A dual philosophy has guided us in the preparation of this book. First, it is to the advantage of all five and a half billion of us who share the planet to improve our interpersonal intercultural communication abilities. The world has grown so small that we all depend upon each other. What happens in one place in the world touches other places. Second, most of the obstacles to understanding can be overcome with motivation, knowledge, and an appreciation of cultural diversity. We hope to supply you with all three.

### **Organization**

We have attempted to organize the book in manageable increments that build on each other. What you learn in one chapter you must carry into the next series of chapters. Our book is divided into three interrelated parts. Part 1 introduces you to the study of communication and culture. After pointing out the importance of intercultural communication in Chapter 1, we use Chapters 2, 3, and 4 to examine communication, culture, and intercultural communication.

Part 2 puts the theory of intercultural communication into practice. The first chapters in this part explore differences in perception, verbal messages, and nonverbal messages. The final chapter explains the ways in which cultures respond differently to business, education, and health-care contexts.

The final part of the book attempts to extend what we have learned throughout the preceding chapters by converting knowledge into action. In Chapter 10 we offer guidelines for improvement as well as a philosophy for the future, a future we believe will be filled with intercultural experiences.

### **Assistance**

Both of us have been interested in culture since we were sophomores in college. Over time we have come to subscribe to the Buddhist and Hindu notions that we learn from each other and that there are many ways of knowing. Culture reaches below levels of awareness, and we are sure, therefore, that some very

special people in our lives have taught us about culture. In this sense, we believe that perhaps we have been both students and teachers to many who have crossed our paths. We know that we have learned a great deal about culture and communication from our contacts with the special people in our lives.

A number of people were instrumental in the preparation of this text. We would like to thank the following reviewers: Gale Auletta, California State University, Hayward; LaRay M. Barna, Portland State University; Nemi C. Jain, Arizona State University; and Armeda C. Reitzel, Humboldt State University. Professor Nemi Jain, in a previous work with us, helped to generate many of the ideas that have found their way into this new project. Susan Hellweg of San Diego State University provided invaluable help. There is not a single chapter in the book that does not reflect her counsel, criticism, encouragement, and friendship. As always, we appreciate the advice and editorial direction of Wadsworth Publishing Company. For this undertaking, we greatly appreciate the conviction, firmness, and charm of Kristine Clerkin and Peggy Randall.

Larry A. Samovar  
Richard E. Porter

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# COMMUNICATION BETWEEN CULTURES

COMMUNICATION  
AND CULTURE

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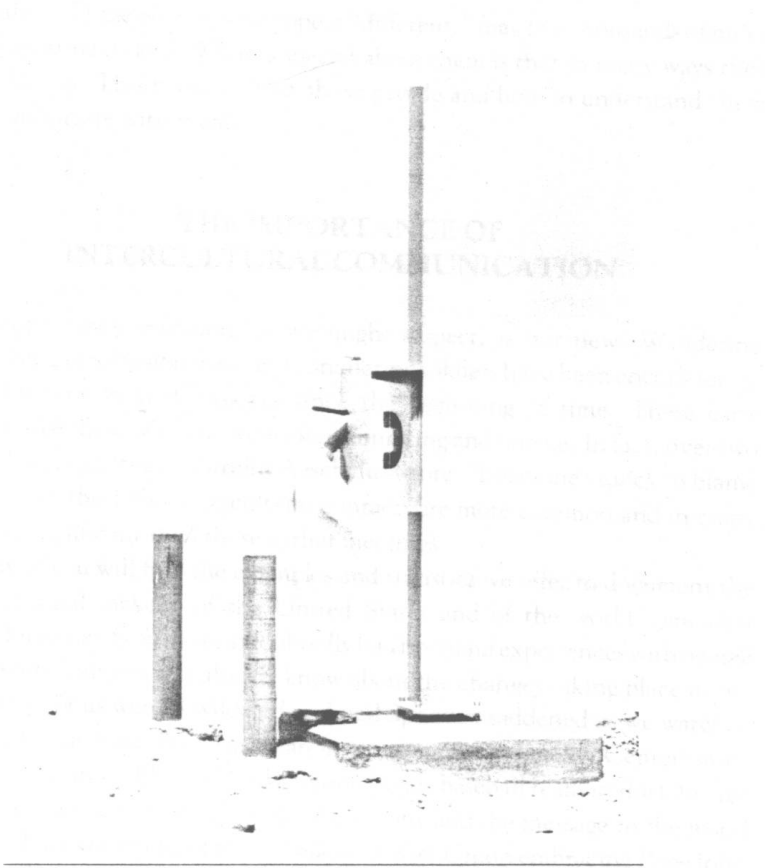
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# I



## COMMUNICATION AND CULTURE



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*Human beings draw close to one another by their common nature,  
but habits and customs keep them apart.*

CONFUCIAN SAYING

*Lack of communication has given rise to differences in language, in  
thinking, in systems of belief and in culture generally. These  
differences have made hostility among societies endemic and  
seemingly eternal.*

ISAAC ASIMOV



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## CHAPTER ONE

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# INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION: INTERACTION IN A CHANGING WORLD

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**W**hen Euripides wrote, "All is change; all yields its place and then goes" in 422 B.C., he probably did not realize that he would be helping to introduce a book on intercultural communication. Yet, the study of intercultural communication is about change. It is about changes in the world and how the people in that world must adapt to them. More specifically, this book deals with the world changes that have brought us into direct and indirect contact with people who, because of their culture, often behave in ways that we do not understand. With or without our consent, the last three decades have thrust upon us groups of people who often