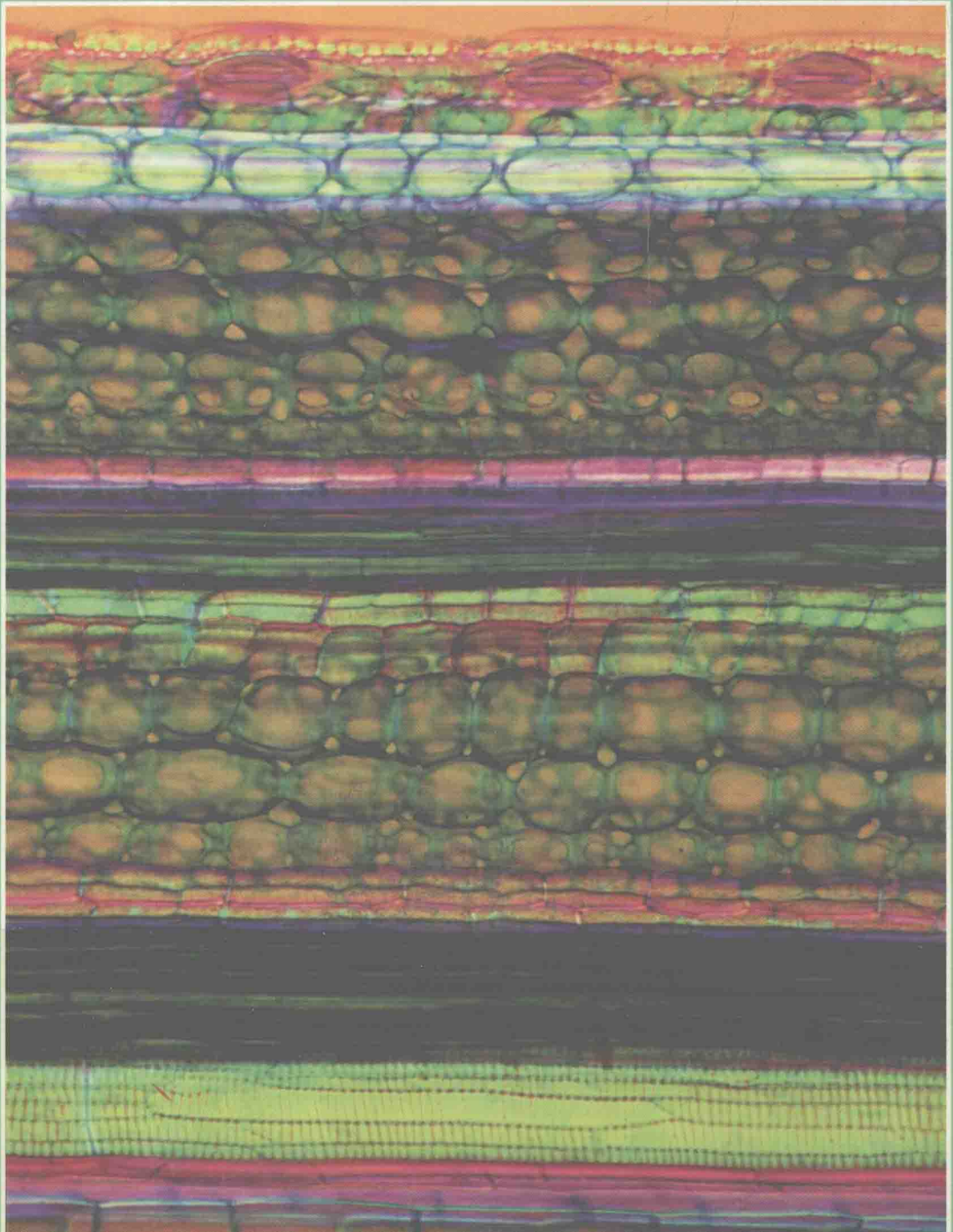


COMMUNICATION BETWEEN CULTURES

Third Edition Larry A. Samovar / Richard E. Porter / Lisa A. Stefani



Communication Between Cultures

Third Edition

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Preface



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

Every tale can be told in a different way.

GREEK PROVERB

We approached the occasion of a third edition with three very different responses: gratification, excitement, and caution. Our pride and egos were delighted that our previous efforts were successful enough to warrant this new edition. We were also excited over the prospects of tinkering with what we had done in the other editions. We knew we had to be prudent when advancing additional perspectives and material so that we did not abandon the orientation that contributed to the popularity of the last two editions. We believe that in this third book we have been able to balance the past, present, and future of intercultural communication. We have retained the core of the field, added current thinking and research, and staked out some new territory.

This book is still about the unique relationship between communication and culture. More specifically, it is about what happens when people from different cultures come together to share ideas, feelings, and information. Because communication and culture work in tandem, we have tried to incorporate the basic principles from both topics throughout this book.

This text is intended for those whose professional or private life is likely to include encounters with people from cultures or co-cultures different from their own. We, therefore, deal with both communication among international cultures and communication among co-cultures in the United States.

Rationale

Worldwide interest in intercultural communication grows out of two assumptions. First, 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. And whether we like it or not, those interactions will continue to grow in both frequency and intensity. Huston Smith said much the same thing when he wrote, “When historians look back on our century, they may remember it most, not for space travel or the release of nuclear energy, but as the time when the peoples of the world first came to take one another seriously.”¹

¹Huston Smith, *The World's Religions* (New York: Harper Collins, 1991), 7.

Second, people now know that the influence of culture affects communication in subtle and profound ways. Our cultural perceptions and experiences help determine how the world looks and how we interact in that world.

Approach

Fundamental to our approach to intercultural communication is the belief that all forms of human communication involve action. Put in slightly different terms, communication is an activity that affects us and other people. Whether we are generating or receiving words or movements, we are creating and producing action. Therefore, any study of communication must include information about the choices we make in selecting our messages, plus a discussion of the consequences of those choices. Hence, this book takes a view of intercultural communication that is both pragmatic and philosophical. We have attempted throughout to translate ideas and concepts into practices that can improve your communication and help you attain your communication goals. We also continue to remind you in each chapter about the consequences of your choices.

Philosophy

A dual philosophy has guided us in the preparation of this book. First, it is to the advantage of all 5.5 billion of us who share the planet to improve our interpersonal and intercultural communication abilities. The world has grown so small that we all depend on each other now. What happens in one place in the world affects other places. Second, most of the obstacles to understanding can be overcome with motivation, knowledge, and appreciation of cultural diversity. We hope to supply you with all three.

Culture and communication, we have come to believe, involve personal matters, and we have therefore developed our own philosophy about intercultural communication. At times, as you read this book, you will observe that we have openly stated our own positions, and we make no apologies for them. We have also made a conscientious effort to keep our own ethnocentrism in check, but for those instances in which it has accidentally emerged, we do apologize.

Organization

We have organized the book in manageable increments that build on each other. What you learn in one chapter, you will carry into the next. The book is divided into four interrelated parts. Part I introduces you to the study of communication and culture. After pointing out the importance of intercultural communication in Chapter 1, we use Chapter 2 to examine communication, culture, and intercultural communication.

Part II focuses on the ability of culture to shape and modify our view of reality. Chapter 3 examines how one's culture influences perception and communication. In Chapter 4, we examine the sources of those perceptions and behaviors by looking at cultural differences in world view, family experiences, and history.

Part III puts the theory of intercultural communication into practice. Chapters 5 and 6 explore differences between verbal and nonverbal messages. Chapters 7, 8, and 9 explain the ways in which cultures respond differently to business, educational, and health care settings.

In Part IV, we 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 a future that we believe will be filled with intercultural experiences.

New Features

The third edition of *Communication Across Cultures* brings a number of significant changes and new features. One of the most obvious changes is that a new author has been added—Lisa A. Stefani. Lisa's research and writing on the role of context in intercultural communication, combined with her extensive travel and teaching experience, gives us an in-depth examination of how one's culture affects the business, education, and health care settings.

Our addition of new content has been guided by the excellent feedback provided by our readers and reviewers. We have, of course, infused a great deal of current material that reflects our own interpretation and vision of the field of intercultural communication. Although some of the new features will be obvious to users of the second edition, many other changes are less visible. Let us mention a few of the alterations from both categories.

Perhaps the most obvious feature of the new book is the addition of a chapter that focuses on the role of culture in the health care setting. In the second edition, we identified the need for people to understand how the business and educational contexts reflected one's culture. By including the health care setting, we have expanded the number of places where people from different cultures encounter each other. In the belief that cultural similarities often contribute to successful communication, we have, in this edition, spent much more time discussing the many ways cultures are alike. For instance, similarities in world views and ethical standards have been added to the new edition. Past editions have focused on the increasing awareness of the *quantity* of intercultural contacts. We now have also turned our attention to the *quality* of those contacts. Because of increased racial tensions in the United States and abroad, we have expanded our analysis of stereotyping, prejudice, discrimination, and ethics.

As more immigrants move from one culture to another, the issues of cultural adaptation take on added significance. Hence, we have added a new section on that particular topic. This edition also offers an increased focus on the role of co-cultures in North America.

As with prior editions, we have integrated fresh examples throughout the book. We have also added hundreds of new references to this current volume.

Acknowledgments

No book is the sole domain of the authors. Many people contributed to this new edition, and we would like to thank them. We begin by thanking our publisher, Wadsworth Publishing Company. In this day of fads and short-lived friendships, we greatly appreciate an association that spans nearly thirty years and includes fourteen books. The staff and editors at Wadsworth have offered us support, sound advice, and the freedom to advance new ideas. We especially acknowledge the editorial direction provided by Randall Adams.

Two other people have been instrumental in bringing this third edition to a rewarding conclusion. First, Michael Gillespie, by his patience and grace, once again succeeded in having us believe that we were the only authors preparing books for Wadsworth Publishing Company. Second, we thank Mary Douglas and Myrna Engler at Rogue Valley Publications; their editing and advice helped us fine tune this edition.

We are grateful to our manuscript reviewers for their many helpful suggestions: Robbin Crabtree, New Mexico State University; Fernando Delgado, Arizona State University–West; Connie Hellmann, Western Connecticut State University; Marilyn J. Matelski, Boston College; and Richard L. Wiseman, California State University at Fullerton.

Finally, we express our appreciation to the thousands of students who have read past editions. They have allowed us to “talk to them” about intercultural communication and, by finding something useful in our exchange, have justified yet another edition of *Communication Between Cultures*.

Larry A. Samovar
Richard E. Porter
Lisa A. Stefani

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PART ONE



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Communication and Culture

Intercultural Communication: Interaction in a Changing World



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

CONFUCIAN SAYING

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

JOHN F. KENNEDY

When in 422 B.C. Euripides wrote “All is well; all yields its place and then goes,” he surely did not realize that he would someday be helping to introduce a book on intercultural communication. Yet he recognized that people, the world, and society are dynamic and always in a state of change. The study of intercultural communication is about change—changes in the world’s fabric of social relationships and how we must adapt to them. This book deals with the international and domestic changes that have brought us into direct and indirect contact with people who, because of their cultural diversity, often behave in ways that we do not understand. With or without our consent, the last four decades have thrust us into social and professional situations with people who often appear alien, exotic, and perhaps even wondrous. These people may live thousands of miles away or right next door.

Importance of Intercultural Communication

Intercultural communication, as you might suspect, is not new. Wandering nomads, religious missionaries, and conquering warriors have encountered people different from themselves since the beginning of time. Those meetings were frequently confusing and quite often hostile. In ancient times, the recognition of alien differences lacked accompanying cultural knowledge and often elicited the human propensity to respond malevolently to those differences. This notion was expressed over two thousand years ago by the Greek playwright Aeschylus who wrote, “Everyone’s quick to blame the alien.” This sentiment is still a powerful element in today’s social and political rhetoric. For instance, it is common in today’s society to hear that *all* of the social and economic problems in the United States are caused by immigrants.

Despite the persistence of this notion, today’s intercultural encounters differ from earlier meetings. They are more abundant and, because of the interconnectedness of the world, more significant. We can now board a plane and fly anywhere in the world in a matter of hours, and the reality of a global economy makes today’s contacts far