CROSS CULTURAL COMMUNICATION:- NEED OF GLOBAL BUSINESS

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ABSTRACT

*Cultural factors have long been known to influence the communication and success potential of competition. Cultural awareness shapes how business firms behave in cross-culturally reflected international markets. It is broadly recognized that cultural factors act as invisible barriers in international business communications. Understanding cultural differences is one of the most significant skills for firms to develop in order to have a competitive advantage in international business.This paper probes some key elements of cross-cultural issues in international business communication and provides a framework for creating competitive advantage for firms engaged in international business.*Cross-cultural communication is imperative for companies that have a diverse workforce and participate in the global economy. It is important for employees to understand the factors that are part of an effective, diverse workforce.

Cross-cultural communication in an organization deals with understanding different business customs, beliefs and communication strategies. Language differences, high-context vs. low-context cultures, nonverbal differences and power distance are major factors that can affect cross-cultural communication.

In this paper we will know about needs of cross cultural communication ,the factors affecting the cross cultural communication and what strategies can be made to overcome these factors.

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Introduction:

Communication is one of the most important functions to master in order for any business to be successful in today's increasingly competitive markets, particularly for firms doing business internationally.It's no secret that today's workplace is rapidly becoming vast, as the business environment expands to include various geographic locations and span numerous cultures. What can be difficult, however, is understanding how to communicate effectively with individuals who speak another language, or who rely on different means to reach a common goal.

Cross-cultural communication has become strategically important to companies due to the growth of global business, technology and the Internet. Understanding cross-cultural communication is important for any company that has a diverse workforce or plans on conducting global business. This type of communication involves an understanding of how people from different cultures speak, communicate and perceive the world around them.

Meaning of cross:-

Cross means out of boundaries

Meaning of culture:-

Culture is the "lens" through which you view the world.it is central to what you see,how you make sense of what you see,how you express yourself.

"culture is the arts elevated to a set of beliefs"   tom wolfe

High- Vs. Low-Context Culture

The concept of **high- and low-context culture** relates to how an employee's thoughts, opinions, feelings and upbringing affect how they act within a given culture. North America and Western Europe are generally considered to have **low-context cultures**. This means that businesses in these places have direct, individualistic employees who tend to base decisions on facts. This type of businessperson wants specifics noted in contracts and may have issues with trust.

High-context cultures are the opposite in that trust is the most important part of business dealings. There are areas in the Middle East, Asia and Africa that can be considered high

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context. Organizations that have high-context cultures are collectivist and focus on **interpersonal relationships**. Individuals from high-context cultures might be interested in getting to know the person they are conducting business with in order to get a gut feeling on decision making. They may also be more concerned about business teams and group success rather than individual achievement.

Jack and Yamato ran into some difficulties during their business negotiations. Jack spoke quickly and profusely because he wanted to seal the deal as soon as possible. However, Yamato wanted to get to know Jack, and he felt that Jack spoke too much. Yamato also felt that Jack was only concerned with completing the deal for his own self-interest and was not concerned with the overall good of the company. Jack's nonverbal cues did not help the negotiations either.

Meaning of communication:-

Communication is a process in which we can transmit our thoughts,ideas,and feelings from one to another.

Cross culture communication:-

Intercultural is the process of sending and receiving messages between people whose cultural background could leads them to interpret verbal and non verbal signs differently.

Cross-Cultural Communication – The New Norm

The Internet and modern technology have opened up new marketplaces that allow us to promote our businesses to new geographic locations and cultures. And given that it can now be as easy to work with people remotely as it is to work face-to-face, cross-cultural communication is increasingly the new norm.

After all, if communication is electronic, it's as easy to work with someone in another country as it is to work with someone in the next town.

Cultural differences:-

1. **Visible cultural differences**

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2. **Invisible cultural differences**

Visible cultural difference are:-

1) **communication styles**

2) **attitudes toward conflict**

3) **approaches to completing tas s**

4) **decision making styles**

5) **attitudes to expression of emotions**

6) **approaches to knowledge**

Invisible cultural differences:-

1) beliefs

2) values

3) expectations

examples:-

1) In some cultures,looking people in the eyes is assumed to indicate honesty and straightforwardness;in others it is seen as challenging and rude in USA the cheapest most effective way to connect with people is to look them in to the eye

   inarab culture share a great deal of eye contact and may regard too little as disrespectful

   in English culture a certain amount of eye contact is required, but too much makes many people

   in south asian and many other cultures direct eye contact is generally regarded as aggressive and rude.

2)
   Different meaning of same gesture

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USA=ok   japan=money   Russia=zero   brazil=insult

3) Skills to overcome differences :-"to handle yourself,use your head;to handle others,use your heart"…………..donald laired

1. respecting differences and working together
2. building trust across cultural boundaries
3. understanding body language
4. connecting with people

Needs of cross cultural communication:-

1. For business opportunities
2. Job opportunities
3. Improves the contribution of employees in a diverse workforce
4. Sharing of views and ideas
5. An understanding of diverse market.

FACTORS AFFECTING CROSS-CULTURAL BUSINESS COMMUNICATION:-

The communication process in international business settings is filtered through a range of variables, each of which can color perceptions on the part of both parties. These include language, environment, technology, social organization, social history and mores, conceptions of authority, and nonverbal communication behavior.

By assessing in advance the roles these variables play in business communication, one can improve one's ability to convey messages and conduct business with individuals in a wide range of cultures.

1. **Language:**

Among the most often cited barriers to conflict-free cross-cultural business communication is the use of different languages. It is difficult to underestimate the importance that an understanding of linguistic differences plays in international business communication. Given this reality, business consultants counsel clients to take the necessary steps to enlist the services of a good translator.

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Language failures between cultures typically fall into three categories: 1) gross translation problems; 2) subtle distinctions from language to language; and 3) culturally-based variations among speakers of the same language.

Gross translation errors, though frequent, may be less likely to cause conflict between parties than other language difficulties for two reasons. Indeed, the nonsensical nature of many gross translation errors often raise warning flags that are hard to miss. The parties can then backtrack and revisit the communication area that prompted the error. Even if they are easily detected in most cases, however, gross translation errors waste time and wear on the patience of the parties involved. Additionally, for some, such errors imply a form of disrespect for the party into whose language the message is translated.

The subtle shadings that are often crucial to business negotiations are also weakened when the parties do not share a similar control of the same language. Indeed, misunderstandings may arise because of dialectical differences within the same language. When other parties with full control over the language with whom the nonnative speaker communicates assume that knowledge of this distinction exists, conflict deriving from misunderstanding is likely.

Attitudes toward accents and dialects also create barriers in international business communication. The view that a particular accent suggests loyalty or familiarity to a nation or region is widespread in many languages. The use of Parisian French in Quebec, of Mexican Spanish in Spain, or subcontinental Indian English in the United States are all noticeable, and may suggest a lack of familiarity, even if the user is fluent. More importantly, regional ties or tensions in such nations as Italy, France, or Germany among others can be suggested by the dialect a native speaker uses.

Finally, national prejudices and class distinctions are often reinforced through sociolinguistics—the social patterning of language. For example, due to regional prejudice and racism certain accents in the United States associated with urban areas, rural regions, or minorities may reinforce negative stereotypes in areas like business ability, education level, or intelligence. Similarly, some cultures use sociolinguistics to differentiate one economic class from another. Thus, in England, distinct accents are associated with the aristocracy and the middle and lower classes. These distinctions are often unknown by foreigners.

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2. <u>Environment and Technology</u>

The ways in which people use the resources available to them may vary considerably from culture to culture. Culturally-ingrained biases regarding the natural and technological environment can create communication barriers.

Many environmental factors can have a heavy influence on the development and character of cultures. Indeed, climate, topography, population size and density, and the relative availability of natural resources all contribute to the history and current conditions of individual nations or regions. After all, notions of transportation and logistics, settlement, and territorial organization are affected by topography and climate. For example, a mountainous country with an abundance of natural waterways will almost certainly develop different dominant modes of transportation than a dry, land-locked region marked by relatively flat terrain. Whereas the first nation would undoubtedly develop shipping-oriented transportation methods, the latter would concentrate on roadways, railroads, and other surface-oriented options.

Population size and density and the availability of natural resources influence each nation's view toward export or domestic markets as well. Nations with large domestic markets and plentiful natural resources, for example, are likely to view some industries quite differently than regions that have only one (or none) of those characteristics.

Some businesspeople fail to modify their cross-cultural communications to accommodate environmental differences because of inflexibility toward culturally learned views of technology. Indeed, cultures have widely divergent views of technology and its role in the world. In *control cultures*, such as those in much of Europe and North America, technology is customarily viewed as an innately positive means for controlling the environment. In *subjugation cultures*, such as those of central Africa and southwestern Asia, the existing environment is viewed as innately positive, and technology is viewed with some skepticism. In *harmonization cultures*, such as those common in many Native American cultures and some East Asian nations, a balance is attempted between the use of technology and the existing environment. In these cultures, neither technology nor the environment are innately good and members of such cultures see themselves as part of the environment in which they live, being neither subject to it nor master of it. Of course, it is

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dangerous to over-generalize about the guiding philosophies of societies as well. For example, while the United States may historically be viewed as a control culture that holds that technology is a positive that improves society, there are certainly a sizable number of voices within that culture that do not subscribe to that point of view.

3. <u>Social Organization and History</u>

Social organization, as it affects the workplace, is often culturally determined. One must take care not to assume that the view held in one's own culture is universal on such issues as nepotism and kinship ties, educational values, class structure and social mobility, job status and economic stratification, religious ties, political affiliation, gender differences, racism and other prejudices, attitudes toward work, and recreational or work institutions.

All of these areas have far-reaching implications for business practice. Choosing employees based on résumés, for example, is considered a primary means of selection in the United States, Canada, and much of northern Europe—all nations with comparatively weak concepts of familial relationships and kinship ties. In these cultures, nepotism is seen as subjective and likely to protect less qualified workers through familial intervention. By contrast, it would seem anywhere from mildly to highly inappropriate to suggest to members of many Arabic, central African, Latin American, or southern European cultures to skip over hiring relatives to hire a stranger. For people in these cultures, nepotism both fulfills personal obligations and ensures a predictable level of trust and accountability. The fact that a stranger appears to be better qualified based on a superior résumés and a relatively brief interview would not necessarily affect that belief. Similarly, the nature of praise and employee motivation can be socially determined, for different cultures have settled upon a wide array of employee reward systems, each of which reflect the social histories and values of those cultures.

Finally, it is often difficult to rid business communication of a judgmental bias when social organization varies markedly. For example, those from the United States may find it difficult to remain neutral on cultural class structures that do not reflect American values of equality. For instance, the socially determined inferior role of women in much of the Islamic world, or of lower

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castes in India—to name just two—may puzzle or anger Western citizens. Nevertheless, if the Western business-person cannot eliminate the attendant condemnation from his or her business communication, then he or she cannot expect to function effectively in that society. An individual may personally believe that a country's social system is inefficient or incorrect. Nevertheless, in the way that individual conducts business on a daily basis, it is necessary to work within the restraints of that culture to succeed. One may choose not to do business with people from such a culture, but one cannot easily impose one's own values on them and expect to succeed in the business arena.

4. <u>Conceptions of Authority</u>

Different cultures often view the distribution of authority in their society differently. Views of authority in a given society affect communication in the business environment significantly, since they shape the view of how a message will be received based on the relative status or rank of the message's sender to its receiver. In other words, conceptions of authority influence the forms that managerial and other business communications take. In working with cultures such as Israel and Sweden, which have a relatively decentralized authority conception or small "power distance," one might anticipate greater acceptance of a participative communication management model than in cultures such as France and Belgium, which generally make less use of participative management models, relying instead on authority-based decision making.

5. <u>Nonverbal Communication</u>

Among the most markedly varying dimensions of intercultural communication is nonverbal behavior. Knowledge of a culture conveyed through what a person says represents only a portion of what that person has communicated. Indeed, body language, clothing choices, eye contact, touching behavior, and conceptions of personal space all communicate information, no matter what the culture. A prudent business person will take the time to learn what the prevailing attitudes are in such areas before conducting businesses in an unfamiliar culture (or with a representative of that culture).

<u>Understand culture diversity:-</u>

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When a person is working is global area it is a big proble to deal with other people.so we have t understand their language and culture for communicate with them.

In such cases, an **effective communication strategy** begins with the understanding that the sender of the message and the receiver of the message are from different cultures and backgrounds.

Nonverbal Differences

Gestures and eye contact are two areas of nonverbal communication that are utilized differently across cultures. Companies must train employees in the correct way to handle nonverbal communication as to not offend other cultures. For example, American workers tend to wave their hand and use a finger to point when giving nonverbal direction. Extreme gesturing is considered rude in some cultures. While pointing may be considered appropriate in some contexts in the United States, Yamato would never use a finger to point towards another person because that gesture is considered rude in Japan. Instead, he might gesture with an open hand, with his palm facing up, toward the person.

Eye contact is another form of nonverbal communication. In the U.S., eye contact is a good thing and is seen as a reflection of honesty and straightforwardness. However, in some Asian and Middle Eastern cultures, prolonged eye contact can be seen as rude or aggressive in many situations. Women may need to avoid it altogether because lingering eye contact can be viewed as a sign of sexual interest. During their meeting, Jack felt that Yamato was not listening to his talking points because Yamato was not looking Jack in the eyes. However, Yamato did not want Jack to think he was rude, so he avoided looking directly into Jack's eyes during his speech.

Language Differences

The biggest issue dealing with cross-cultural communication is the difficulty created by language barriers. For example, Jack does not speak Japanese, so he is concerned with his ability to communicate effectively with Yamato. There are some strategies that Jack can use to help establish a rapport with Yamato. Jack can explain himself without words by using emotions, facial expressions and other nonverbal cues. He can also use drawings and ask for an interpreter.

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Additionally, companies that have to deal with cross-cultural communication can hire employees with proficiency in other languages. Fortunately for Jack and Yamato, they both had excellent translators who communicated their words. The next cross-cultural issue regards how individuals deal with power distance.

Power Distance

Power distance relates to how power is distributed within an organization. Typically, American companies utilize a low power distance and have more informal hierarchies that allow for interaction between executives and their subordinates. Managers ask for feedback from employees and will even socialize with subordinates. Companies with high power distance are typically very hierarchical in nature and have severe differences in authority. Some Japanese companies may utilize this power structure.

Strategies for Overcoming Language Barriers

Language barriers are a common challenge in international business settings—and a two-way process. What native speakers often don't realize is that frequently it is not the other person's accent but their own way of speaking that creates the greatest barriers to effective communication. Use the strategies below to ensure you're not putting up your own roadblocks to effective international communication.

1. Speak slowly and clearly.

Focus on clearly enunciating and slowing down your speech. Even if you're pressured for time, don't rush through your communication. Doing so often takes more time, as miscommunication and misunderstanding can result and you'll ultimately have to invest additional time in clearing up the confusion.

2. Ask for clarification.

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If you are not 100% sure you've understood what others say, politely ask for clarification. Avoid assuming you've understood what's been said.

3. Frequently check for understanding.

Check both that you've understood what's been said and that others have fully understood you. Practice reflective listening to check your own understanding (e.g. 'So what I hear you saying is…') and use open-ended questions to check other people's understanding. Ask, 'what's your understanding of this process?' instead of 'is that clear?'

4. Avoid idioms.

Business language is often contextual, and therefore culture specific. For example, in the US, baseball terms are used extensively: 'Straight off the Bat,' 'Ballpark figures,' 'Out in left field,' 'Touch base,' 'Strike a deal'. As a good general rule, if the phrase requires knowledge of other information—be it a game or metaphor—recognize that this may make your communication more difficult to be understood.

5. Be careful of jargon.

Watch the use of TLAs (Three Letter Abbreviations) and other organizational language that may not be understood by others. If you use them, provide in parentheses a description of what these are so others can learn to use the same language you do.

6. Define the basics of business.

In international business contexts terms such as: 'success', 'doneness', 'meetings', 'punctuality', etc. may mean different things to different people. Spend time early in your communication defining what these mean to you and others. Invest in building a shared vocabulary.

7. Be specific.

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Spell out your expectations and deadlines clearly. Instead of, 'Please get back to me shortly,' say 'Please email the completed report by 5 pm Eastern Standard time on Wednesday, February 21.'

8. Choose your medium of communication effectively.

Carefully choose your form of communication (phone or video conference, email, instant message, etc.). Be mindful not to 'overuse' email. While useful, there are times when the medium is likely to be ineffective. When a message is complex and complicated or there is tension or conflict that needs to be resolved, switch to another medium.

9. Provide information via multiple channels.

Follow phone calls with emails that summarize what's been said. When possible, provide presentations, agendas, etc. in advance so those working in their non-native language can get familiar with materials.

10. Be patient.

Cross-cultural communication takes more time. If not at all times, certainly initially you cannot expect your communication to occur with the same speed and ease as when you are communicating with someone from your own culture.

Techniques of Cross-Cultural Business Communication

Prior study of the country where you will do business is the most important step to successful international business negotiations. Taking the time to get to know the local culture will serve you and your company well. Learning and applying knowledge about another culture can help your business perform well internationally. Cross-cultural business communication starts with your taking the initiative to learn about the places where and the people with whom you will do business.

Awareness

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Just the simple act of being aware of your surroundings before you enter business negotiations in another country can help you succeed. Study the culture of the country to which you're traveling before you arrive. Learn what insults them and determine the cultural norms in situations like dining out and meeting new people, both of which are common in business dealings. Americans and Japanese view business negotiations very differently, for example. Americans view original contracts as being very important, while Japanese view them as a starting point for future negotiations.

Do as the Romans Do

When you're in another country, try to act as the locals do whenever possible. No amount of pre-trip studying of a culture can prepare you for every social situation, but paying attention to those around you can help you work your way through business and social dealings. For example, British business culture allows for discussion and criticism of ideas in a business meeting, but in many hierarchical cultures, business meetings are the forum to inform employees of decisions already made. There is no room for criticism or questioning.

English

Although English is the world's language of business communication, remember that many people learn English as a second language. The figures of speech you use on a regular basis may not be understood by someone whose native language is not English. This can be the case even in two English-speaking countries. Speak clearly and simply. Don't speak louder, or so slow as to insult the person with whom you're speaking, however. Get a reliable interpreter if necessary to ensure clear communication.

Presentations

Again, study the culture before you make your presentation. If the culture is more relaxed than yours, you may have to start your presentation later than you originally anticipated. Allow for networking and talking time before your presentation in these cultures. Be ready to present your material using the technology available in the country. You may have to use an overhead

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projector or a blackboard instead of a computer and projector. People in some cultures do not like visual aids in presentations, but would rather witness your oratory skills.

Steps for Improvement in cross cultural communication:-

Step 1

Run meetings to expose your employees to other cultures. Introducing employees who will be working together in a non-threatening environment enables a good working relationship long term. Learning about another culture's language, rules and norms for acceptable behavior helps prepare your employees to deal with situations as they arise. Changing preconceptions can lead to more conducive working relationships.

Step 2

Conduct activities to demonstrate how dependent we are on language. For example, dedicate a day to being silent. Have each employee develop a contract stating what they hope to learn, how long they will remain silent (what exceptions can be made) and how they plan to cope without speaking all day. After experiencing a day with limited communication, participants can typically relate to being in a foreign environment more easily.

Step 3

Provide workshops, tips and techniques for communicating effectively in cross-cultural work environments. People act according to the values of their own culture. Others from another culture might interpret behavior differently. Practicing such strategies as active listening (paraphrasing what is said to ensure understanding can be achieved) and using multiple forms of communication, such as written, audio and visual, can enhance employee involvement in assuring that conflicts do not arise because of cultural misunderstandings due to lack of awareness.

Step 4

Coach employees to mediate conflicts related to cultural misunderstandings. Provide opportunities for employees to respond to situations from viewpoints different than their own. Divide a group of people into pairs to conduct role-playing exercises that allow participants to

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acknowledge culture difference exist. Encourage each pair to think about a conflict they have experienced recently due to cultural differences. Have each participant describe what they might find offensive or unusual. Let each participant suggest how the problem would be handled in their own culture. Together, have the participants develop a resolution to the problem. Have each pair report to the larger group on their experiences.

Conclusion:-

Cross cultural communication is about dealing with people from other cultures in a way that minimizes misunderstandings and maximizes your potential to create strong cross cultural relationships. Many failures in international cooperation and conflict resolution seem to be related to communication problems and cultural differences. In other words, the establishment of realistic, proper and effective communication, based on mutual cultural understanding and on goodwill, would solve many national and international disputes.

The above tips should be seen as a starting point to greater cross cultural awareness and one can get success in his international business by this awareness.

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