



TITLE: EXPLORING THE SKILLS OF AN EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION OF A LEADER IN THE CROSS-CULTURE SETTINGS

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Abstract

The paper aimed to explore communication skills in cross-cultural settings. Effective communication is vital in any organization, especially in cross-culture settings. Communication deals with giving and exchanging information by talking, reading, listening, and even writing. Communication is essential in every culture, organization, and company; yet, if it is not done correctly, it might cause problems within cross-cultural settings or in diverse workplaces. Effective communication in cross-cultural settings attracts followers and teams to work effectively without conflict and misunderstanding within any culture and entity—the author review related literature on communication skills, theories, and models. The literature revealed that effective communication has a significant effect on cross-cultural leaders. The paper discusses general communication skills, models, and communication theories in cross-culture settings, leadership, and practical communication skills. The article is grounded on the foundation that local and cross-cultural leaders can experience success whenever effective communication skills are employed.

Key Words: Cross-cultural Leadership, Effective Communication, Power distance, Individualism, Collectivism

Introduction

Globalization is essential in contemporary business, yet it has raised many issues for cross-cultural leaders (Ermasova, 2021). The problems that encounter cross-cultural leaders are different communication styles, different attitudes toward handling power, different approaches to completing a task, and different norms and belief systems (Viken et al., 2021). Cross-cultural leaders need to be aware of these issues and develop cultural sensitivity to lead in diverse cultures. Cultural sensitivity is the ability to handle and respect others' way of life. Any cross-cultural leader who overlooks these cross-cultural issues is at risk of losing relevance among cross-cultural followers.

The paper highlights four dimensions of effective communication skills in cross-cultural settings. First, the article defines and explains general communication skills, types, communication styles, importance, functions, and communication models. Second, the paper describes the nature of communication in cross-cultural settings and provides skills to comprehend the cross-cultural audience; it further acknowledges cross-cultural awareness in communication and the common barriers that affect cross-cultural communication. Third, the

paper synthesizes cross-cultural leadership and communication skill, explores clear and concise messages in communication, and suggests ways to reshape the mindset of cross-culture leadership and the concept of rebuilding cross-cultural communication and leadership trust. Lastly, the study provides examples of Biblical communication for cross-cultural leaders and ends with conclusions that summarize the discussion and recommend ways for academic and future work.

There are many well-established effective communication skills that scholars have built to suit cross-cultural leaders (Odiwe, 2018). (van der et al 2019; Miftari, 2018), think that communications skills involve open-mindedness, cohesion and clarity, confidence, and emotional intelligence. (Merkin, 2017), postulated that cross-cultural leaders need to empathize and be open-minded to their cross-cultural followers. Cross-cultural leaders who feel for their audience and practice flexibility and are open-minded will always be proactive in conflict resolution. Cross-cultural leaders who cannot exercise empathy, flexibility, and an open mind are at risk of losing the influence of their followers.

General Communication Skills

General communication skill is needed everywhere there is an exchange and receiving of information (Karnieli, 2020). (Khasawneh,2021) defines general communication as an act of exchanging and receiving information from the individual or a group with clarity. (Tolkyn et al., 2021) posit that exchanging and receiving information may involve feelings, passion, clarity, comprehensiveness, and emotion. (Wolderslund et al. 2021) argue that communication without passion, clarity, and comprehensiveness may lose its meaning: Therefore, cross-cultural leaders should speak with passion and with a clear tone despite the national accents. Cross-cultural

leaders who communicate ambiguously and without emotional intelligence cause confusion and conflict in the workplace (Tolkyn et al., 2021; Giudici & Filimonau, 2019). There is a need for cross-cultural leaders to be humble and respectful to their cross-cultural partners in communication.

Types and styles of communication

General communication focuses on verbal, nonverbal, writing, and visual (Clendon et al., 2021). The verbal component of communication concerns the words that one chooses and how they can be heard and interpreted. (Tiferes et al., 2019) argue that verbal communication cannot be isolated from nonverbal communication because the tone, pitch of the voice, body language, and facial expression go together. (Cherfan et al., 2021), stated that clarity of speech, enduring calmness and focus, being polite, and considering cultural rules of etiquette will help the process of verbal communication. Nonverbal language transmits a message using body language or signs such as eye contact, smile, facial expression, head nodding, acceptance, and openness (Tiferes et al., 2019; Vrij et al., 2019). Failure to understand the communication types will lead to misinformation to a particular audience.

There are four major communication styles that legends of communication have established that automatically portray the communicator's emotion (Omura et al., 2018). The communication styles include passive, aggressive, passive-aggressive, and assertive. The styles may suit various circumstances and a particular setting.

(Khasawneh,2021; Bigman et al,2019) argue that, assertive communication stands to be the best among the four styles because it expresses needs, desires, emotions, ideas, and feelings; it is not biased. It also features and exposes communication links. (Ophilia, & Hidayat, 2021), postulated that interpersonal communications that do not cover communication styles may have a shortfall.

Effective Communication

Effective communication skills have unique principles that cross-cultural leaders must adapt to (Yue et al., 2021). The principles comprise careful listening, understanding the message, preparing to listen, and paying keen attention to the speaker. (Tiferes et al., 2019), Stated that listening actively is an essential skill that any leader can adopt. (Yue et al., 2021), identify the principles of listening respectively, be ready to listen, focus on the speaker, pay keen attention to the speaker, and forget about judging the speaker, consider the main direction of the message that has been spoken, consider comprehending the broadly and the main idea of the message and the specific words that have been used, and distraction must be avoided. If these principles are not correctly applied, the communication may be considered ineffective.

Importance and functions of communication

There is no doubt that communication is significant to organizational leaders, business managers, and cross-cultural leaders. The significance of effective communication enhances collaboration and corporate unity; it allows both the sender and receiver to transact freely. (Genç, 2017), posit that well-articulated communication allows both senders and receivers to get a clear understanding to accept information quickly. The importance of communication impacts both the sender and the receiver to act responsibly. Communication functions depend on the intent in

which the information is transmitted to the person or a group who receives the message (Willemjan et al., 2021). The intention of communication includes persuasion, motivation, control, emotional expression, and information. Without communication functions, information becomes meaningless to the sender and the receiver.

Models and theories of cross-cultural communication

Many scholars have discussed the communication process and developed numerous models to govern it (Merkin, 2017). The three most common models include Linear, Interactional, and Transactional. (Genç, 2017), claims that models highlight giving information and focus on the distinctive parts of communication. In addition, the models illustrate visual representations of composite interaction. The models are essential because they signify the basic communication structure and give a comprehensive understanding.

Furthermore, (Genç 2017) pointed out the various elements of communication that help to guide the specific part of communication. The field of understanding, known as geographical environment, values, beliefs, and heredity, can inspire how the transmitter creates communication. Both sender and receiver bring distinctive experiences in communication. One of the most powerful and dynamic communication models is transactional. It doesn't use sender and receiver instead refers to as communicators.

These show that communication is attained through two elements send and receive. First, it is a collaborative activity where speakers co-create the interaction's procedure, result, and

effectiveness. It differs from the first linear model, in which the aim is directed from one individual to another. It varies from a known model called the interactional model, in which reactions attain comprehensiveness. People build a collective sense in a more vigorous process in the model called transactional.

Culture has negative and positive effects on communication due to how power is distributed in various cultures (Karibayeva & Kunanbayeva, 2018). Power distance is when members are ready to agree on differences in power and status in society. Power distance is grouped into two high and low. The high power distance dimension has either positive or negative effects on both the sender and receiver (Wulani & Junaedi, 2021). In countries that experience high power distance, subordinates are unwilling to open up communication and cannot speak back to superiors. These make communication one-way and monotonous in high power distance cultures. In addition, low power distance embraced collaboration and shared communication.

Cultures notify how we comprehend our interactions with different people. Many people and societies recognize types and kinds of cultures based on dependent "individualism" and collectivism, independent (Minkov et al., 2017). The authors further stated that people like to focus on themselves and separate from others in the individualist system. The habit of individualist leaders is to communicate directly to their subordinates. They prioritize straightforward and explicit information without being unambiguous. Most Western and European cultures can be typically individualist. Collectivism emphasizes mainly a group rather than an individual. In collectivist cultures, people mostly "see themselves as linked to others. They describe themselves in terms of associations with other people and understand their principles as more likely to vary across different situations." Collectivists maintain relationships

with others and exalt teamwork. Collectivist communicates indirectly to avoid conflict and embarrassment. African and Asian are typical examples of collectivist cultures.

Communication in Cross-cultural Settings

Globalization has increased the concern about cross-cultural communication. Cross-cultural communication identifies both variances and likenesses between cultural groups to successfully participate within a given context (Askari et al., 2018). Cross-cultural communication denotes the channels in which people from diverse cultural settings adjust to develop communication with each other. Any cross-cultural leader who communicates without identifying the differences and similarities is at risk of losing the influence of their members.

Understanding the Cross-culture audience

There is a need for leaders across cultures to develop communicational competence that may help them to reach their various audiences in cross-cultural settings effectively. These competencies are cultural sensitivity and linguistic intelligence that compares cross-cultural leaders to craft a message that a cross-cultural audience will understand clearly. In addition, the audiences have diverse cultural attributes such as their world view, norms, beliefs, and behavior that can serve as a barrier to the leaders in cross-cultural settings if it is not managed well.

Promoting Cultural Awareness in Communication

There is a need for leaders in a cross-cultural setting to promote cultural awareness in communication since globalization has become relevant in today's business (Walter et al., 2017). Cultural awareness is an act of being sensitive and respectful of other cultural values, norms, and beliefs. For cross-cultural leaders to survive in cross-culture settings, there must be training on

cultural sensitivity, which involves cross-cultural communication (Brannen, 2020). In addition, cultural knowledge of workers needs to be built, and cultural literacy skills need to be promoted.

Common barriers to Cross-cultural Communication

Celebrating diversity can assist in developing cultural literacy, consciousness, and acceptance of other cultures. Cross-culture communication has several barriers that can resist leaders in cross-cultural settings (van Vuuren et al., 2021). The authors highlighted the six common barriers to cross-culture communication, 1. "ethnocentrism, 2. stereotyping, 3. psychological barriers, 4. language barriers, 5. geographical distance, and 6. conflicting values". If these obstacles are not intentionally addressed, they will create a severe challenge for cross-cultural leaders. Ethnocentrism is one of the common barriers to cross-cultural communication. Ethnocentrism occurs when one values particular cultural practices more than others or whenever we condemn people and their behavior that are distinct from ours (Kennedy et al., 2019). Those who entertain ethnocentrism are in danger of failing in cross-cultural and multicultural settings. (Jack et al. 2021), argue that biases centered on gender, age, social class, and the profession can likewise impact behavior and communication outcomes between individuals with diverse nationalities.

The psychological conditions of communicators impact their attitude towards effective communication, thus lowering their ability to communicate effectively.

(Greenaway et al. 2015) said, when individuals are going through mental disturbances, their communication is highly affected by their challenges. Language Barriers

Language has become the most common obstacle to communication, leading to misunderstandings and misapprehensions between people. (Demchenko et al. 2021), postulated that communication becomes difficult to understand whenever the common language is avoided.

Cross-culture Leadership and Communication skills

Modern globalization has compared leadership in cross-cultural settings to communicate effectively to their audience due to the cultural diversities and language barriers (Demchenko et al. 2021). Cultural differences and language barriers are vital challenges that leaders who do not equip themselves before taking an international job look for trouble (Yari et al. 2020). (Minkov, et al. 2017) stated that leaders who are not trained in diverse cultures and linguistic intelligence cannot function well across cultures. Cross-cultural leaders who fail to be culturally sensitive and communicate effectively may not survive in an international arena because of differences in culture and language.

Clear and concise Messages in Communication

Cross-cultural communication should be clear and concise to the audience. Clear and concise communication means the message should be deliberate, straight to the point, have proper grammar, and avoid strange terms (Gemedá & Lee, 2020). Concise and clear communication gives the audience an understanding of what they want to achieve. Clear and concise communication reduces stress and conflict in organizations and companies. (Cherfan, & Allen, 2021), postulated that cross-cultural leaders who ignore concise and clear communication are always involved in conflict and tension. It is a great necessity for cross-cultural leaders to communicate pointedly and concisely in cross-cultural settings.

Reshaping the mindset on Cross-cultural Leadership

There is a need for cross-cultural leaders to reshape their mindset. Many leaders who work across borders value their culture more than others and think that their culture is superior to others (Clendon et al., 2021). (Karnieli 2020), argue that leaders' mindsets need to be reshaped before they can perform well in cross-cultural settings. All cultures are not the same; rather, leaders should view all cultures as the same for what they are in their settings. Leaders who reshape their mindset and adjust to their cross-cultural environment are on the right path to success. (Yari et al. 2020). (Yari et al. 2020), suggested six ways that cross-cultural leaders can shape their mindset: "1. keep an open mind and be flexible, 2. develop some knowledge and skills of diverse cultural backgrounds, 3. Listen attentively, 4. Beware of non-verbal dialogue, 5. Preserve relationships with team members, and 6. respect people and their norms. Leaders who refuse to reshape their mindset in other people's cultures may endanger their leadership roles.

Cross-cultural Communication and leadership trust

Cross-cultural leaders can be trusted when adjusting their perception of their cross-cultural partners' customs, cultures, and beliefs (Cherfan. & Allen, 2021). Trust is an essential segment of every healthy relationship and organizational culture because it inspires communication, effectiveness, collaboration, and commitment. Therefore, cross-cultural leaders must be trusted to develop linguistic intelligence and cultural awareness in cross-cultural settings. Leaders who desire to be trusted and build team confidence need to adjust their perception; instead, they may fall into the pit.

The Bible and Cross-cultural Leadership

Jesus Christ, who lived an exemplary life for His followers, also demonstrated the approach of cross-culture communication. He could be an example of a cross-culture leader. He came from heaven to address the issues that destroyed humankind on earth. In (John 3: 12), Jesus stated that "if I have told you earthly things and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things" In this scripture, Jesus as a cross-cultural leader, communicated with his audience through the common language and terms that the followers could understand. The parables, such as the fig tree, lost sheep, and the lost coin, all these terms were earthly things that he used to communicate to his audience to achieve his goal. However, some deliberately did not listen to the message of the Savior because of their perception and mindset toward Jesus. But it did not destroy the fact that Jesus spoke clearly and concisely to his cross-cultural audience.

Besides Jesus Christ, the most cross-cultural leader that people can learn and adapt his style is Paul the apostle to the Gentiles. "As a Jew from the tribe of Benjamin (Philippians 3:5), Paul preached the gospels across cultures." He developed cultural intelligence, and linguistic intelligence, and he became committed and respectful to his cross-cultural congregations. Paul had the skills to adjust to any culture and custom. Following Paul's experience and skills will lead to success in our cross-cultural leadership. "To the Jews, I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law, I became like one under the law (though I am not under the law) to win those under the law. To those not having the law, I became like one who did not have the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law) to win those who did not have the law. To the weak, I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some." (1 Corinthians 9:20-22 New International Version.)

Conclusion

The paper explored effective communication skills in cross-culture settings in three dimensions. The three dimensions were general communication, communication in cross-cultural settings, and cross-culture leadership and communication skill.

The related literature of the article exposed types, styles, theories and models, functions, and the significance of effective communication skills in a cross-cultural setting. The paper further explored how cross-culture leaders can comprehend their cross-cultural audience, promote cultural awareness in communication, and cover common communication barriers in cross-cultural settings. In addition, the article highlighted that a clear and concise message gives the audience a comprehensive understanding. The strategies to reshape the mindset of cross-culture leadership open doors for them to improve. Moreover, the paper emphasized that leaders who build leadership trust through communication skills may survive in cross-cultural settings. The paper also integrated the Biblical aspect of communication in cross-cultural settings. It posited that the Bible is a cross-cultural book, and Jesus is the best cross-cultural leader. Again, an example of Paul as a gentile preacher and cross-culture leader who exhibited cultural and

linguistic intelligence was exposed in the paper. Finally, the paper concludes that leaders in cross-cultural settings must be trained in effective communication skills and be literate in other cultures before taking a job across- borders.

Recommendations

1. Cross-culture leaders should clear all biases and prejudices and be willing to learn the culture of others.
2. Cross-cultural leaders need to be trained to communicate effectively in the cross-cultural setting.
3. Cross-cultural leaders must be positive-minded without condemning other cultures and be committed and respectful to their team members.

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