Chapter 3
Intercultural Communication
Topics in This Chapter

- The Importance of Intercultural Communication
- Dimensions of Culture
- How We Form Judgments of Others
- Ways to Broaden Intercultural Competence
- How to Make Ethical Decisions in Other Countries
Reasons for the Increasing Importance of Intercultural Communication

- The globalization of markets
- Technological advancements
- Global connectivity
- An intercultural workforce
Mergers, acquisitions, and buyouts stir growth beyond national boundaries.

American companies in global markets must adapt to other cultures.

New trade agreements, declining domestic markets, and middle-class growth drive global markets.
The development of new transportation and information technologies fuel the explosive growth of global markets.

The Internet and the Web are changing the way we live, the way we do business, and the way we communicate.
Expanding Intercultural Workforce

- Immigration makes intercultural communication increasingly necessary.
- Business communicators must learn to adapt to an intercultural workforce and multinational companies.
Characteristics of Culture

- Form Our Self-Identity and Community
- Is Inherently Logical
- Combines Visible and Invisible
- Is Learned
- Is Dynamic
Dimensions of Culture

- Individualism
- Context
- Culture
- Formality
- Communication Style
- Time Orientation
Low-context cultures tend to be logical, linear, and action-oriented.

High-context cultures tend to be relational, collectivist, intuitive, and contemplative.

North America, Germany, Scandinavia

Japan, China, Arab countries
Individualism

- High-context cultures tend to prefer group values, duties, and decisions.
- Low-context cultures tend to prefer individual initiative, self-assertion, and personal achievement.
Formality

- Some cultures may prefer greater formality in dress, speech, and social interaction.

- North Americans place less emphasis on tradition, ceremony, and social rules.
Communication Style

- High-context cultures rely on nonverbal cues and the total picture to communicate.
- Meanings are embedded at many sociocultural levels.

- Low-context cultures emphasize words, directness, and openness.
- People tend to be informal, impatient, and literal.
Time Orientation

- Time is precious to North Americans.
- Time correlates with productivity, efficiency, and money.
- Time is seen as unlimited and never-ending in some cultures.
- South Americans have a more relaxed concept of time.
Characteristics of High-Context and Low-Context Cultures

High Context

Japanese
Arab
Latin American
Spanish
English
Italian
French
North American
Scandinavian
German
Swiss

High-context cultures are relational, collectivist, intuitive, and contemplative.

Low Context

Low-context cultures are logical, linear, individualistic, and action-oriented.
Proverbs Reflect Culture

- U.S. Proverbs
  - He who holds the gold makes the rules.
  - Waste not, want not.
  - The early bird gets the worm.
  - If at first you don’t succeed, try, try again.
Proverbs Reflect Culture

- Chinese Proverbs
  - A man who waits for a roast duck to fly into his mouth must wait a very, very long time.
  - A man who says it cannot be done should not interrupt a man doing it.
Other Proverbs

- No one is either rich or poor who has not helped himself to be so. (German)

- Words do not make flour. (Italian)

- Wealth that comes in at the door unjustly, goes out at the windows. (Egyptian)
How We Form Judgments

Stereotype

- An oversimplified behavioral pattern applied uncritically to groups
How We Form Judgments

Prototype

- A mental representation based on characteristics that are flexible and open to new definitions
How We Form Judgments

Prejudice

- A rigid attitude based on erroneous beliefs or preconceptions
Question

Why is it important to make generalizations in describing cultural prototypes?
Question

- Are all generalizations invalid?
Techniques to Broaden Your Intercultural Competence

- **Descriptiveness** – giving descriptive feedback instead of judgmental feedback
- **Nonjudgmentalism** – being tolerant, which helps prevent defensive reactions
- **Supportiveness** – encouraging others with head nods, eye contact, and facial expressions
Intercultural Proficiency

- Requires a conscious effort
- Leads to more satisfying relationships
- Makes work life more productive, gratifying, and effective
Increased Intercultural Proficiency Can Reduce Ethnocentric Reactions

- Ethnocentrism is the belief in the superiority of one’s own race and culture.
- Ethnocentrism causes us to judge others by our values.
- Ethnocentrism causes us to expect others to react as we would, while others expect us to behave as they would.
Techniques for Bridging the Gap Between Cultures

- **Tolerance** – being open-minded and empathetic
- **Helping others save face** – raising their social standing through positive comments
- **Patience** – for example, letting others express their thoughts without finishing their sentences for them
How to Improve Oral Communication With Intercultural Audiences

- Learn foreign phrases.
- Use simple English.
- Speak slowly and enunciate clearly.
- Observe eye messages.
- Encourage accurate feedback.
How to Improve Communication With Intercultural Audiences

- Check frequently for comprehension.
- Accept blame.
- Listen without interrupting.
- Smile when appropriate.
- Follow up in writing.
How to Improve Written Communication With Intercultural Audiences

- Consider local styles.
- Observe titles and rank.
- Use short sentences and short paragraphs.
- Avoid ambiguous expressions.
How to Improve Written Communication With Intercultural Audiences

- Strive for clarity.
- Use correct grammar.
- Cite numbers carefully.
- Accommodate readers in organization, tone, and style.
How to Make Ethical Decisions Across Borders

- Broaden your view of other cultures.
- Avoid reflex judgments.
- Find alternatives.
- Refuse business if options violate your basic values.
- Embrace transparency.
- Don’t rationalize shady decisions.
- Resist legalistic strategies.
Tips for Improving Communication Among Diverse Workplace Audiences

- Seek training.
- Understand the value of differences.
- Don’t expect conformity.
- Learn about your cultural self.
- Make fewer assumptions.
- Build on similarities.