Intercultural communication problems

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Rezumat

Comunicarea interculturală se referă la comunicarea efectivă între persoane din diferite medii culturale. În ultimii ani, specialisti din diferite domenii au realizat cît de importantă este comunicarea interculturală pentru activitatea lor de zi cu zi. Caracterul global al multor probleme contemporane, precum protecția mediului inconjurator, sărăcia și terorismul international necesită o cooperare mai aprofundată între națiuni. De aceea comunicarea interculturală a devenit o necesitate vitală în timpurile noastre.

Însă in procesul de comunicare interculturală ar putea apărea mai multe dificultăti cum ar fi : limba ca barieră de comunicare, diversitatea culturală si etnocentrismul. Dar aceste probleme pot fi ușor depășite prin formarea competenței de comunicare interculturală și prin dezvoltarea abilităților de comunicare.

Intercultural communication refers to the effective communication between people of different cultural background. In recent years practitioners in a wide variety of fields – scientific cooperation, academic research, business, management, education, health, politics, diplomacy and others – have realized just how important intercultural communication is for their everyday work. Fast travel, international media and the internet have made it easy for us to communicate with people all over the world. The process of economic globalization means that we cannot function in isolation but must interact with the rest of the world for survival. The global nature of many modern issues such as the environment, poverty and international terrorism call for cooperation between nations. Intercultural communication is no longer an option, but a necessity.

Each culture has its distinct aspects, that is why intercultural communication can be the cause of conflict and disorder. There are three main issues which are at the root of the problem of intercultural miscommunication: language as a barrier, cultural diversity and ethnocentrism.

Language.

Even when all the participants in a cross-cultural encounter supposedly speak the same language, this is undoubtedly one of the most important barriers that may hinder the interaction process between interlocutors. Many companies all over the world readily assume that English is the new lingua franca of global communication, just as Latin was used as such in the Middle Ages and have declared it their official language. But it happens that within the same speech community, there are so many language differences determined by a variety of social variables such as ethnic group, gender, age, class, job, etc. that we may even wonder how many of us actually speak the same language within the same speech community If the approximately 360 million native speakers of English sometimes experience their shared language as a barrier, for the estimated 1.5 billion of non-native speakers of English, the obstacle is even more complicated. Speakers of English as a foreign language often superimpose the intonation, grammar and vocabulary of English onto their native language, giving as result the use of an interlanguage, which is a hybrid between English and the corresponding mother tongue.

Cultural diversity.

On dealing with cultural diversity R. D. Lewis explains the concept of the cultural unconscious in these terms: "Collective programming in our culture, begun in the cradle and reinforced in school and workplace, convinces us that we are normal, others eccentric". A similar thought is found in this quote from D. Barnlund: " Every society had its own way of viewing the universe and each developed from its premises a coherent set of rules of behavior. Each tended to be blindly commited to its own style of life and regarded all others as evil." Perceiving those

who have different modes of life to that of oneself as evil, peculiar or eccentric is indeed a form of cultural myopia that clouds the perception and understanding of culture diversity.

Ethnocentrism.

Ethnocentrism is the tendency to judge other peoples culture by the standards of your own culture. The own culture is thought of as normal, right and superior, while different cultures are perceived as abnormal, wrong and inferior. Ethnocentrism may be of two kinds : negative ethnocentrism and positive ethnocentrism. Negative ethnocentrism is the belief in the inherent superiority and naturalness of one's own culture and the inferiority of another . Traditionally, Britons have acquired the reputation of holding negative ethnocentric values with respect to other cultures. Positive ethnocentrism is the opposite, since it refers to the elevation of another culture because of a perception that one's own is inferior or in some way lacking. Spaniards may provide a good example of positive ethnocentrism when they compare themselves to individuals from other Western countries. However, it's important to stress the fact that either form of ethnocentrism clouds our ability to truly understand and evaluate another culture or its individual members.

In conclusion I'd like to mention that in a world that is increasingly interconnected, the success of organizations and their people depends on effective cross-cultural communication. The main key to effective cross-cultural communication is knowledge. It is absolutely essential that people understand the potential problems of cross-cultural communication and make a huge conscious effort to overcome these problems. So an effective cross-cultural communication can be acquired only by increasing our intercultural competence and communication skills.

Bibliography

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