Effect of cross-cultural differences on industrial communication

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Abstract. This research deals with the important circumstances influencing cross-cultural communication and disagreements arising within it. Current social changes affect the world we live in and as a result the relationships between countries and individuals. Globalisation, economic integration and labour migration have a significant impact on industrial communication. The successful operation and development of an enterprise are heavily dependent on effective communication between co-workers who often come from different cultural background nowadays. The specificity of this type of communication is described in the article. The special attention is paid to the possible problems in cross-cultural interaction. The chain of causes and effects leading to miscommunication is determined. The article also provides analysis of the barriers to effective communication and describes the problems caused by them. The importance of cross-cultural competence is emphasised and the principles of effective management as a way of solving cross-cultural conflicts in communication are characterized.

1. Introduction
The problems of intercultural communication and tolerance are very important nowadays due to the current social and economic situation characterized by the dynamics and complexity. Globalisation has made cross-cultural communication inevitable. Business, education, industry, trade and other spheres of social activity are characterised by communication with different cultures. Globalisation has changed the context in which cross-cultural communication takes place [1]. If earlier people had to communicate with individuals or even groups of other cultural origin mostly while travelling, nowadays cross-cultural communication is a part of our everyday activity at the university or at work. Many developed countries have become multi-cultural societies that leads to different cultural issues in the workplace. “Worldwide intercultural cooperation drives corporate growth and development across the globe resulting in a heightened demand for a qualified but diverse workforce” [2]. Due to the complex, diverse and mobile workforce, nowadays the need for cultural awareness and cross-cultural communication is greater than ever [3].

Economic integration and advances in transportation and telecommunication have broken down geographical isolation. The world is more global and mobile than ever before. Globalisation is linked by new technology, communication is, for example, intensified via electronic media facilitating trade contacts and international projects.

When companies attempt to expand their activity abroad there is always the risk associated with the work in unfamiliar business environment. If managers and employees see cultural diversity as something that can be understood and learnt, they try to develop and improve their cultural intelligence and competence as part of their communication skills, their companies succeed.

In the modern world cultural intelligence is a critical competence [4]. This concept was formulated in order to ease and understand multicultural interactions in business organizations. Cross-cultural intelligence assists adaptive cultural adjustment. Due to increased number of cultural contacts and clashes; it has attracted academic interest [5]. Cultural intelligence leads to an enhanced and
successful experience while a lack of it causes challenges [6]. Intercultural competence implies knowledge of traditions, customs, social norms, specificity of communication and non-verbal behaviour as well as the relevant skills.

As a result of ongoing integration in the world and regional economy, many companies are increasingly becoming aware of the potential that a multinational market gives to businesses. They can operate worldwide and set up subsidiaries, branches and offices abroad that leads to new markets and employment of cheaper workforce. This provides opportunities for the expansion of the business and brings about a substantial increase of organizations. “However, there are many serious conflicts which may arise owing to the fact that there may be entirely different ways to run the companies and different opinions on how the employees should handle their work, especially the barriers between internal staff, hence cross-cultural communication conflicts” [7].

Countless immigrants and refugees leave their familiar surroundings and move to the new countries. They have to adapt to a new cultural environment, establish and maintain a stable working relationship with new colleagues.

All kinds of co-worker relations are associated with psychological well-being of employees and their job satisfaction. The development of positive cross-cultural communication is essential for host country national employees as well as immigrants [8].

2. Problems in cross-cultural communication

Effective business communication depends on a lot of factors that have to be considered.

2.1 Communication

Communication is a type of human activity that implies knowledge sharing, mutual influence and interaction between partners. It occurs when a sender has an idea, a feeling or an emotion that he or she intends to communicate to another person (a receiver), then he or she expresses it in the form of message (either verbal or non-verbal). When the receiver gets this message, he or she usually gives feedback consciously or unconsciously. It is a return message that is of no less significance than the previous one. Thus, communication is an ongoing process.

A person cooperating with other people to ensure one’s life activity is the subject of communication. The system of human relationships is mediated by culture, which determines the nature and effectiveness of human communication. But in the course of various types of human activity, there is a need for more advanced and effective forms of communication, which gives rise to different roles and significance of certain forms of communication. In other words, depending on various reasons, various forms of communication acquire an appropriate purpose in the life activity of people, that is, a function. Functional analysis of communication clarifies the social role that it performs in society, and helps to understand its essence more accurately.

2.2 Cross-cultural communication

Cross-cultural communication is characterized by different features. First of all, the sender and the receiver of the message have to belong to different cultures. The participants of the communication should be aware of the cultural differences of each other. The realization and attitude towards these differences affect the type, form and result of the contact. Each participant of the cross-cultural communication has his or her own set of rules both verbal and non-verbal. Besides cultural differences there are other factors that affect the process of interpretation such as age, gender, profession, social status of an individual. That is why the act of communication depends on tolerance, character and personal experience of participants.

2.3 Non-verbal communication

Non-verbal communication plays a key role in face-to-face interactions [9]. Body position, gestures and eye contact are very important part of non-verbal communication affecting the business and working relationships. It is necessary to take into consideration not only social norms and cultural
traditions but also the role of body language in intercultural communication. For instance, prolonged eye contact can symbolize honesty and confidence in Europe and the USA but at the same time it can be considered rude in some Asian countries. The differences in the interpretation of body position, gestures and handshakes are numerous and affect the business communication directly. The same is also true about the working relationship in the same company. The managers must train their employees in the proper way to be aware of these cultural differences in order to maintain effective communication with colleagues and clients.

2.4 Possible problems in industrial communication

The sequence of possible problems in cross-cultural communication can be presented in the following way: lack of knowledge → communication barrier → misunderstanding → impossibility to achieve the goal of communication → stress → generalisation of the problem → biased perception of communicative situation → conflicts or avoidance of further direct contacts.

General knowledge of language, culture, customs, traditions, social norms and typical nonverbal behaviour of people from other countries is essential for effective cross-cultural communication and lack of it causes a lot of problems.

There are different types of communication barriers such as physical, semantic or individual ones. They are caused by a variety of sources. Physical barriers like walls, doors, noise or distance are determined by external factors.

Language can cause semantic barriers even if it is native for both of speakers. The use of unknown terms, slang, jargon, ambiguous words can lead to misunderstanding. In cross-cultural communication this aspect is especially important.

Barriers created by the sender of the message or the receiver are usually called individual barriers. They include the differences in personality and perception. In the case of cross-cultural communication this type of barrier is often caused by cultural differences.

Misunderstanding is unavoidable element of communication [10]. Due to misunderstanding, i.e. inability to understand the message of the sender at all or incorrect interpretation of it, it gets impossible to achieve the goal of communication that causes a large amount of stress to interlocutors. As a result, the whole communicative situation is perceived in a wrong, biased way that negatively affects the attitude towards the speaker and the subject of the conversation. All these factors cause a lot of problems at work and can result in avoidance of any further direct contacts with people of different origin. If contacts are inevitable this type of miscommunication can lead to numerous conflicts.

3. Principles of effective cross-cultural communication in business environment

The interaction between the participants of interethnic communication is based on the certain principles. The empathic approach that implies the awareness of cultural differences is dominant. Empathy that seeks to understand the problems of cross-cultural communication and solutions to them increases the ability to understand the interlocutor and as the result the effectiveness of communication.

The main principles of cross-cultural communication are:
- to treat your colleagues with respect;
- to listen attentively;
- to attempt to understand the way your colleagues feel;
- to have sincere interest in cooperation with co-workers;
- to have ability to understand opposite point of view;
- to expand knowledge of different cultures and traditions;
- to avoid stereotyping;
- to enhance cross-cultural competence;
- to increase tolerance and empathy.
The knowledge of similarities and differences between speech acts in different languages contributes to successful contacts and prevents misinterpretation and misunderstanding [11].

4. The culture of inter-ethnic communication

It is clear that people of different cultural origins operate within such group and not all of its members are able to perceive the cultural values of different nations correctly (as they are sometimes incomprehensible and unaccustomed), but co-workers should be able to show tolerance and tact.

A person’s attitude to a particular nationality largely depends on the personal experience of communicating with its representatives, with friends and acquaintances. Such experience can be not only positive, but also negative: narrowness of assessments, absolutization of individual traits depending on personal sympathy and antipathy, etc. are possible. This may result in an unfavorable atmosphere with a national tone in the team.

The moral climate in public organizations relating to organic culture is determined by the range of social and moral values shared by their members; public ones belonging to bureaucratic organizational culture are governed by officially adopted laws and codes for public servants to follow. In commercial organizations, goals are achieved by creating a highly sustainable motivation of employees - members of the organization, including moral motivation.

Manufacturing, energy, mining, construction, wholesale and retail trade, hotels, restaurants, social work and healthcare are characterized by the high level foreign workforce employment. Migrants are often employed in low-paid and hazardous jobs that do not require any special skills.

The increasing number of migrant workers in the labour market and the establishment of multinational or even global firms make employment one of the areas in which the importance and impact of cultural diversity increases considerably at both the national and the organization level.

As a result of economic globalization, cross-cultural differences are becoming more and more relevant in businesses that expand into other countries and appoint managers of different nationalities.

The specific character of a culture of inter-ethnic communication is determined primarily by the value orientations of society, which are relatively widespread in the ethnic community. The implementation of national norms of behavior, traditionally determining the style, level and nature of relations with representatives of other nations is a part of the interpersonal culture of communication with representatives of various nationalities.

Behavioral characteristics of an individual in inter-ethnic communication include friendliness, the willingness and ability to make contacts with persons of other ethnic groups and maintain friendly relations with them, taking into account the ethnic specificity of people who come into contact, well-bred behavior towards people of other nationalities in any, even conflict situations.

The culture of inter-ethnic communication is a person’s respectful attitude towards people of different nations, their culture, traditions, languages, history, and national dignity, which implies the fulfillment of legal, moral and ethical standards in a multinational environment by people. The culture of inter-ethnic communication includes moral and aesthetic literacy, which helps individuals to understand the psychological state of people involved in an ethno-conflict situation and to determine ways of solving the problem in a rational way. It also includes knowledge of human rights, nations and national relations, different cultures and their mutual influence, national, social, universal and interfaith conflicts and their causes.

Thus, the culture of inter-ethnic communication acts as a system of ideas and beliefs, ways, forms and types of specific cultural activities distinctive for an individual, nation and social groups or society as a whole carried out in order to deepen the process of interaction and interference of people of different nationalities.

The culture of inter-ethnic communication is specific interrelation and intercommunication in which people of different nationalities exchange experiences, values, thoughts, feelings, experiences. Not only personal qualities, but also features of the psychology, traditions, and culture of the peoples, whose representatives are communicating, show up in the process of inter-ethnic communication.
The culture of inter-ethnic communication is a part of intercultural communication, which should be considered as a combination of various forms of relations and communication between individuals and groups belonging to different cultures. The goal of intercultural communication is to enrich every national culture while preserving its unique character.

Within each sphere, intercultural communication takes place at different levels. Inter-ethnic communication is defined as intercultural communication at the micro level. It is communication between persons representing different nations (ethnic groups) as typically a society consists of various ethnic groups that create and share their subcultures.

Communicative influence as a result of the exchange of information is possible only when the sender (the person directing the information) and the receiver have a single or similar codification and decoding system.

5. Conclusion
Economic integration due to the development of technology, transportation, trade and telecommunication has led to many significant changes and broken down geographical isolation. Nowadays the world is more global and dynamic that is has ever been before and the importance of cross-cultural communication is vital.

Awareness of cultural peculiarities of co-workers and following the main principles of effective cross-cultural communication help people avoid problems arising in cooperation which may result in bad performance of any enterprise.

Effect of cross-cultural differences on effective industrial communication is immense as they have an impact on co-worker’s relations, job satisfaction and even the result of the work. If the company wants to succeed, its managers and employees should broaden their minds to be ready for acquaintance with new cultures and traditions.

As a result of the presented study the following recommendations would be useful for businesses:
1. Enterprises and businesses should give opportunities for their employees of all levels to go abroad to be engaged in cross-cultural communication and to obtain the essential knowledge, skills and directions for managing the cultural diversity. Obtained language training and cross-cultural knowledge will result in improvement of intercultural competence.
2. A new enterprise culture should be established on the basis of mutual understanding of culture and the requirements of the enterprises’ development strategy and mutual benefit policy should be enforced for the mutual benefit of both parties.
3. The idea of a cooperative team formation should be realized in enterprises and sponsor cultural programmes should be organized in their host countries periodically.

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