

MULTICULTURAL COMMUNICATION

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Abstract: Multicultural communication is a dynamic and essential aspect of contemporary society particularly in a globalized world where interactions between individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds are commonplace. This thesis is about intricacies and challenges of multicultural communication, highlighting the importance of understanding cultural differences in language, nonverbal cues, values and norms. Effective multicultural communication involves not only linguistic proficiency but also cultural sensitivity, empathy and the ability to adapt one's communication style to accommodate diverse audiences. Though the case studies and theoretical frameworks, this thesis examines the impact of cultural differences on communication processes, including misinterpretations, stereotypes, and misunderstandings. By embracing diversity and promoting effective multicultural communication, individuals and organizations can build strong relationships.

Multicultural communication refers to the exchange of messages between people from different cultural backgrounds. Jeffrey Scott Mio [2], G.Hofstede [1], Milton Bennet [3] and others explored psychology of multiculturalism, multicultural communication. It encompasses the ways in which individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds interact, share information, and understand one another. Here are some key aspects:

1. Cultural awareness: Understanding one's own cultural background as well as being aware of and respectful towards the cultural norms, values, and communication styles of others.

2. Verbal communication: Different cultures may have varying linguistic styles, accents, and dialects. Effective multicultural communication involves being mindful of these differences and adapting one's speech to ensure clarity and understanding.

3. Nonverbal communication: Body language, gestures, facial expression and other nonverbal cues can vary significantly across cultures. Being sensitive to these cues can vary significantly across cultures. Being sensitive to these cues and understanding their meanings is crucial for effective multicultural communication.

4. Listening skills: Actively listening to others from diverse cultural backgrounds is essential for building rapport and understanding. This involves not only hearing the words being spoken but also understanding the cultural context and underlying meanings.

5. Empathy and respect: showing empathy and respect, openness towards people from different cultural backgrounds fosters trust and mutual understanding. It's important to approach multicultural communication with a mindset of curiosity and willingness to learn.

6. Adaptability: Being adaptable and flexible in communication styles and strategies is necessary when interacting with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds. This may involve adjusting one’s tone, language, and behavior to accommodate cultural differences.

7. Awareness of stereotypes and bias: Recognizing and challenging stereotypes, biases, and prejudices is essential for fostering inclusive and effective multicultural communication. Being mindful of one’s own biases and actively working to overcome them is key.

8. Conflict resolution: Conflicts may arise due to misunderstanding or cultural differences. Effective multicultural communication involves employing conflict resolution strategies that promote understanding, compromise, and mutual respect.

Overall, multicultural communication is about bridging cultural divides, fostering mutual respect and understanding, and building connections across diverse communities. It requires awareness, empathy, adaptability and a commitment to effective and inclusive communication practices.

One of my observations was at the university, where students should work on a project as a team. The students were from different cultural backgrounds. During a meeting, one team member, Ahmed, from a culture where it’s considered respectful to avoid direct disagreement, listened silently. However, another team member, from a culture that values open discussion and debate, expresses her concerns about the proposed approach. Ahmed’s silence might be interpreted as agreement, but his body language showed his disagreement. So, the team members asked his opinion directly. Ahmed, feeling respected and valued, shared his concerns, which lead to a fruitful discussion where different perspectives are considered, and the team ultimately decides on more inclusive approach.

So, here effective multicultural communication involves:

1. Recognizing and respecting cultural differences in communication styles.
2. Being sensitive to nonverbal cues and body language.
3. Encouraging open dialogue and ensuring that all team members feel empowered to express their opinions.
4. Actively seeking clarification to prevent misunderstandings and promote inclusivity.

By navigating these cultural differences with empathy and understanding, the team can leverage its diversity to achieve better outcomes.

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3. Milton J.Bennet. Intercultural communication: A current perspective.
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